

Historical perspective of Indian Poetry in English



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ABSTRACT

This paper is written to understand the historical perspective and the development of Indian poetry in English. Indian poetry has been developed in different phases by taking forward different forms and places. Pre-Independence and Post-Independence period of Indian poetry are embarked with the then Indian philosophy and patriotic feelings of the writers. Indian poetry was propagated not only by literary historians of India but also by great personalities of India who sacrificed a lot in the national movements and had seen from British colonization to Indian freedom. This paper deals with many reformist authors and trends of Indian poetry with its unique form and style.

Keywords : Colonization, Decolonization, Intellectualism, Ardour, Corollary, Heterogeneous, Nuances, Array.

I. INTRODUCTION

The custom of Indian Poetry in English shows various phases from its inception in the history of English poetry. Many reviewers have distinguished them with the help of the major influences and the period division such as Colonization and Decolonization; Colonization and Post-Colonization; Pre-Independence and Post-Independence; Neo-Classical, Modern and Post-Modern.

These periods or distinct groups are clearly found out in the Indian Poetry in English. These movements, influences and periods are spread over the period more than 175 years- the period of Colonialism (1825-1900), Nationalism (1900-1950) and Post-Colonialism (1950 onwards). The Pre-Independence period of Indian poetry is measured from the 1820s to 1947/50 and the period of Post Independence English

Poetry from 1950 onwards which is sub-categorized as Modern (1950-80) and Post-Modern (the late 1980s onwards) eras of Indian English Poetry. However, Indian Poetry in English may be broadly understood in its two major phases- Pre Independence and Post-Independence.

In pre independence period, Literature in Indian language expressed Indian Philosophy, Religion and Culture, Upanishadas, Puranas, Bhakti literature etc. Indian Poetry in native languages also possesses remarkable and profound base which can be clearly observed in the poetry in all Indian languages inclusive of Sanskrit, the language of ancient classical Indian Literature. The Mughal and British colonizers had started to create the situation of Art and Peace.

K R S Iyengar has rightly pointed out in his Indian Contribution to English Literature: ““The three

significant factors that emerged at this moment and acted as a solvent of the doubts and perplexities of the situation were:

1. The new intellectualism and renascent ardour among the Indians, as symbolized in Raja Ram Mohan Roy
2. The perseverance of the Christian missionaries; and above all
3. The persuasiveness and metallic clarity of Macaulay's prose style".

In Post-Independence period, 'Writers' Workshop' was an organization formed by P. Lal in 1858 in Calcutta. It played an important role in making the modern Indian English Poetry popular. It provided a 'native' flavour to Indian Poetry in English. It gave the Indian poets their own identity as poets. Nissim Ezekiel, in his poetry, is conscious of his alienation as he had spent most of his life in highly westernized circles in cosmopolitan Bombay. He becomes a detached but sensitive observer of the characteristic Hindu response to evil and suffering. The works of several other modern poets reveal a great variety of mood, tone and technical strategy that forms the scene of Indian English Poetry today.

Indian poetry has been treated and indigenous in order to describe the Indian situations. HL Vivian Derozio is considered to be the first poet writing in Indian English followed by many eminent poets like Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt among many others. Derozio was not only a poet but also a teacher. Derozio was not an Indian originally, his father was a Portuguese and his mother was an Indian lady. He was groomed in a way where he acquired great love for India and was a strong patriotic poet. He was a blend of Western and Christian in his thoughts while an Indian in writing. His poetry remains one of the initial appearances of an observable fact which was destined to assume a great deal of importance in the Indian literary scene in the years to follow.

Nissim Ezekiel is believed to be a forerunner in the modern Indian English poetry. Some of the notable poets of Ezekiel's period are A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar etc. Rabindranath Tagore wrote his works primarily in Bengali language. Later on he developed a small body of work (mainly prose) in English and was accountable for the translations of his own works into English. In sequence, it is obvious that the creative impulses of the English-educated Indians, swirled as they were by the poetry to which they were exposed drew their sustenance and impetus from the same tradition and they tried to create a new poetry out of that experience and inspiration.

The way of writing of Indian poets is sometimes alleged that they have imitated the West form, tradition and models in their writing but this argument seems invalid due to the reason that they have used their own style in their works in English language rather than in native language. The most vital part is that Indian creative genius has flowered in the English language with extreme success which cannot be challenged. In fact the new literature begins in imitation in assertive nationalism and matures into the feeling of nationhood in India.

One of the greatest corollaries of the Western impact on India was an awakening of national consciousness, a rediscovery of her cultural heritage and feeling of patriotism. Indian culture was destructed to the great extent which was highly influenced due to the introduction of English education which brought with it new socio-political doctrines as well as a rationalistic view of life. Contrary to biased Western thinking, ancient Indian culture was not the culture of blind faith or superstition but a composite one which, though complex and heterogeneous, had in it strong scientific, technological and rationalistic components, along with intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual components.

While most of the Indian writers were great patriots swirled by a nationalistic feeling and enthusiasm along with reformist zeal in their conscience, they drew the sustenance for their expressions in prose, verse or the spoken word as much from their passionate love of the English expression as from larger motivations related to the freedom movement and social regeneration. They loved to speak and write in English and the desire to write creatively in English came to them in the most natural way, which was matched by an astonishing ability and skilled use of the language. The need for a short discussion of the themes of the early Indian English poets arises from the fact that many of the hasty decisions and easy generalities made in respect of these poets have been based on the themes on which they wrote. The reality of their poetry originated its themes in the Indian landscape, in the Indian rural scene and in Indian history.

There is unanimity among literary historians that Indian creative writing in English has begun before Minute of Indian Education (1835) by Macaulay. Considering the scarcity of writing in a foreign language, Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar has remarked "While many good Indo-Anglian novels and many more short stories have already demonstrated the feasibility of Indian writing, English fiction. It is nevertheless true that the unique intricacies of social life and untranslatable nuances of conversational speech are better rendered through the medium of one's own mother-tongue".

Indian critic V. K. Gokak has recommended five broad categories which may accommodate Indian writing in English. Among the first three categories, he has mentioned the books written by Englishmen of letters of India themes, the fourth category he mentions book written by Indians and in the fifth category he mentions Indo-English when the translations started into English.

The index of writers includes an impressive array: Arvind Krishna Mehrotra writes on Toru Dutt and

'An Eurasian Poet', while Amit Chaudhuri reads Nissim Ezekiel as a 'poet of a minor literature' and Peter D. McDonald contextualizes Mehrotra and 'the interplay of languages'. Crossovers of form and content, author and subject, as in the instance of the McDonald piece on Mehrotra – the latter himself a contributor in the anthology – formally mirror ongoing dialogues within the community of Indian poets in English. The book underscores how these conversations are diachronic, occurring both in the present day and simultaneously travelling back in time to contact precursors, acknowledge influence and delineate a tradition. The raft of authors within the book also comprises wellknown Indian poets like Jeet Tayil and Anjum Hasan, sharing space with scholars of the field like Anjali Nerlekar and Laetitia Zecchini. The Indian poetry was gained popularity not only by the above said poets but also was contributed by women poets who championed with the Indian style of poetry and elevated the structure of Indian English in writing.

II. REFERENCES

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