

## English medium of Indian Literature Growth and Deployment: A Critical Study Researcher. Thamer Yousif Allawi

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اللغة الإنكليزية في الادب الهندي: التطور والانتشار: دراسه نقدية

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### المخلص

في القرن الذي سبق استقلال الهند، بدأ العديد من الكتاب الهنود باستخدام اللغة الانكليزية كوسيلة للتعبير الادبي. كافلي فينكاده بوريا هو الذي شرع (تولى) اول عمل ادبي باللغة الانكليزية. ولعل عمله المترجم (حسابات الجينز ١٨٠٩) هو اول عمل منشور في اللغة الانكليزية. في الاصل اول كتابه في اللغة الانكليزية ظهرت في النشر، وكان راجا راموهان روي اول من كتب مقاله في اللغة الانكليزية بعنوان "دفاع الهنود عن التوحيد بالله" (١٨١٧). وظهر بعد راجا راموهان روي كتاب مثل، هنري لويس، تورو دوت، اربيندو كوس، رايندرانات تاكور، ساروجيني نادوا، واخرون ابدوا اهتماما كبيرا في اللغة الانكليزية. معظم هؤلاء الكتاب كانوا متعلمين في الخارج وكانت اعمالهم الادبية متأثرة بالأفكار والفلسفة الغربية. البحث يقدم بعض القضايا ذات الصلة بتطور الادب الانكليزي الهندي من ايام ما قبل الاستعمار الى يومنا هذا.

### Abstract

The century before independence of India many of writers began to use the English language as a medium of literary expression. Cavelly Venkata Boriah was the one who undertaken the first literary work in English. His translated work, Accounts of the Jains (1809), is perhaps the first published work in English. The first original writing in English appeared in prose. Raja Rammohan Roy was the first to write in English and his essay is called A Defence of Hindu Theism (1817). After Raja Rammohan Roy many writers appeared like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and others who showed keen interest in English language. Most of these writers were educated abroad and their literary accounts were influenced by western ideas and philosophy. The political and social environment was charged with highly patriotic sentiments. The paper presents some of the issues in connection to the development of Indian English literature form pre-colonial days to the present day.

### Introduction

Rich cultural traditions and a variety of languages, customs and literary writings is the hallmark of India. Over the years Indians have absorbed the languages of them

erstwhile rulers, Mughals and British. There we have writers writing not only in regional languages but also in foreign languages. These writers have been influenced by Western and Indian cultures. The liberation of India from foreign subjugation gave a fresh impetus to Indian art and creativity. Nationalism had already aroused patriotic sentiments and this in turn led to reestablishment of the Indian identity. The post-independence era witnessed social, political and economic changes of far reaching consequences. The impact deeply told upon Indian literature. Writers of this era indulged in soul-searching with a passionate desire to be honest towards themselves and to the society at large. The popularity of English culture and education reinvigorated Indians to express their thoughts in English language. Gradually the volume of Indian writing in English increased and this led to the proliferation of Indian English Literature: Indian English Literature may be defined as literature Written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality. (Naik, 2) Initially there were many controversies over the nomenclature of the Indian English Literature. It was termed variously as 'Indo-Anglian Literature', 'Indian Writing in

English' and 'Indo-English Literature'. This debate came to an end when Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote a book titled, Indian Writing in English (1962). Ever since then both the terms – 'Indian Writing in English' and 'Indian English Literature' are in use. Some Indian writers have tried to divide Indian English Literature into different phases and periods. Critic M.K. Naik in his book, A History of Indian English Literature (1982), gives the following definition of Indian English Literature in the content pages, "The Pagoda Tree: From the Beginnings to 1857, The Winds of Change: 1857 to 1920, The Gandhian Whirlwind: 1920-1947 and The Asoka Pillar: Independence and After". (M.K. Naik: Content pages) On the other hand, Makrand Paranjape in his book, Indian Poetry in English (Paranjape 7) (1993), has suggested the periodization of the Indian poetry in English. The first period is 1825

to 1900: Colonialism, the second 1900 to 1959: Nationalism, the third 1950 to 1980: Modernism and the fourth Post-Modernism: 1980 onwards. Much before independence some Indian writers began to use the English language as a medium of literary expression. The first literary work in English was undertaken by Cavelly Venkata Boriah. His translated work, Accounts of the Jains (1809), is perhaps the first published work in English. The first original writing in English appeared in prose. Raja Rammohan Roy was the first to write in English and his essay is called A Defence of Hindu Theism (1817). After Raja Rammohan Roy we had writers like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and others who showed keen interest in English language. Most of these writers of preindependence India were educated abroad and their literary accounts were influenced by western ideas and philosophy. The political and social environment was charged with highly patriotic sentiments. The poets imitated foreign moods and forms but after 1857 the poetry became an attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse for self-expression the spiritual force for a great reshaping and building. (Sri Aurobindo.397)

### **The Growth**

At about this time the struggle for independence was going on in India and the nation was passing through a phase of transition. R.N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Sarojini Naidu, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan wrote articles and stories which helped to promote nationalism. They focused on the social and political scene during the British rule. However, after the initial beginning, under the impact of western education and philosophy the Indian writers began to imitate western writers and their ideas. In poetry and fiction, the Indian writers adhered to western norms.

They were influenced by the Romantic poets of the west. The Romantic poets like Byron, Shelley and Keats left an indelible mark on the mind and soul of the Indian writer. In the works of Toru Dutt we see the impact of Keats. Her works include A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields (1876, translated from French into English) and another volume of verses – Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan (1882). The Romantic style is evident in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo. He wrote on the themes of love, sorrow and death. Some of his works are Short Poems (1980-1900, 1895-1908, 1902-1930 and 1930-1950). His magnum opus is Savitri (first definitive edition, 1954), a long epic poem. The contemporaries of Sri Aurobindo are Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu. Tagore won the Nobel Prize in 1913 for his book Gitanjali (1912). His other works are The Gardener (1913). The Crescent Moon (1913). Stray Birds (1916), Lover's Gift and Crossing (1918) and The Fugitive (1912). His chief theme is ". . .the relation between the finite and the infinite" (M.K. Naik: 59). Sarojini Naidu's poetry depicts the style and mood of Romantic, Persian and Urdu poets. Her prominent poetical works are The Golden Threshold (1905), The Bird of Time (1912), The Broken Wing (1917) and The Sceptred Flute (1946). In the works of preindependence Indian writers, the romantic mood is laced with patriotic fervour. This augmented the love of the people for their motherland. In western writings freedom has always been associated with Romanticism. The western education helped to arouse in the Indians the emotion to look after their own country and they fought to get their freedom. The spirit of patriotism was further highlighted in the works of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The socio-political situation of preindependence India is portrayed poignantly in the novels of these

writers. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) depict the rigid caste system in India. R.K. Narayan's writings still continue to focus on problems of India and her people. Some of his works are *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The Dark Room* (1938). Raja Rao in *Kanthapura* (1938) drew attention towards the social structure in India. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao continued writing after 1947. The literature of preindependence India also reflects the zeal and enthusiasm of patriotism that was being kindled amongst the masses. On 15 August 1947, political freedom filled Indians with new spirit and vigour. Indian writers like Dom Moraes, P. Lal, V.K. Gokak, G.V. Desani, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Kamala Das, Keki N. Daruwalla, Mamta Kalia, Monika Verma, Jayanta Mahapatra, Gauri Deshpande, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Pritish Nandy, Keshav Malik and others came forth with their literary contributions. They excelled in poetry, prose and criticism. Although Indian English Literature had caught public attention in the early part of the twentieth century, its wider respectability and speedy growth began after independence. The post-independence period marked the beginning of Modernism in Indian English Literature. Modernism as a technique and philosophy came to the Indian literary scene only after independence. It was the time when social and literary developments in England and America brought about a change in the writings of those regions. In Indian English Literature, Modernism was first discussed in P. Lal's introduction to a small anthology titled. *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry* (P.Lal and R. Rao, 1959). This anthology represented the poetic works of modern Indian English writers like Ramanujan, Ezekiel, Jussawalla, Parthasarthy, Daruwalla, Mamta Kalia, Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande and others. A number of anthologies have come out on Indian prose and poetry in English. In these, modernism has been defined in different ways. Modernism is discussed in V.K. Gokak's (ed.) *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry* (Gokak: 83) (1970). Gauri Deshpande's (ed.) *An Anthology of Indo-English Poetry* (1974). Keki Daruwalla's (ed.) *Two Decades of Indian Poetry: 1960-1980* (1980) and Keshav Malik's (ed.) *Centre and circumference* (1984). The writings from 1960s onwards reflect the chief features of modernism in Indian English Literature. Poetry of this period identified itself with the trials and tribulations of the modern Indian society. The writings reflect the gloom and despair of the average Indian. Life is not so rosy as it seems to appear and reality, with all its problems, is actually very harsh. The writers began to discuss the self in relation to society. Alienation, gloom, despair and disillusionment are reflected in the writings during this age. Looking at the literature after 1960s one gets the feeling that from then onwards there is a definite shift in the writing pattern. There is a departure from the romantic, happy mood that had gripped the minds of the people after independence. The 'new' literature that is now being written is more realistic and 'Modern' in its approach. It reflects the demands and needs of the people and expresses their hopes, joys, sorrows and pains. The list of post-independence Modern Indian English writers is inexhaustible. Modernism was discussed in the writings of P. Lal. Some of his verse collections are *The Parrot's Death and Other Poems* ((1960), *Change! They Said* (1966), *Draupadi and Jayadratha and Other Poems* (1967) and *Collected Poems* (1977). In 1969 P. Lal brought out another anthology of poems titled. *Modern Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology and a Credo*. Besides, he translated *Bhagwad Gita* (1965) and *Ghalib's Love Poems* (1971). The other modern Indian writer is Nissim Ezekiel. His poetry voices concerns and feelings of the new generation. His writings reflect the problems and complexities of modern life. The feeling of alienation, deprivation, loss and pain are evident in his works. The quest to live happily in this complex world is a recurring theme in his works. His volumes of poems are *A Time to Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959). *Hymns in Darkness* (1976) and *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982). Apart from this he wrote *Three Plays* (1969) (*Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragi – Comedy* and *The Sleep Walkers: An Indo – American Farce*). Nissim Ezekiel's poems are discussed further in the fifth chapter. Like Nissim Ezekiel, the writings of Dom Moraes reflect depression, loneliness and insecurity. He tries to escape from the stark realities of life into fantasies and flights of imagination. Dom Moraes was born in India but was brought up in England and this uprooting might

have made him insecure and disillusioned. His works include collections of verses – A Beginning (1957), Poems (1960), John Nobody (1965) and Selected Poems (1955- 65). His autobiography is My Son' Father (1968). He won the Hawthorndon Prize for Poetry. Writings of Adil Jussawalla, A.K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Shiv K. Kumar reflect the East- West dichotomy. Some assimilation of foreign ideas and beliefs into Indian culture and values is evident. Adil Jussawala has written two collections of verses – Land's End (1962) and Missing Person (1974). Besides, he edited New Writings in India (1974) for Penguin Books. Another outstanding writer of 1960s is A.K. Ramanujan. He has poured out his thoughts and experiences in his collections of verses – The Striders (1966), The Interior Landscape (1967), Relations (1971), Speaking of Siva (1972) and Samskara (1976). While living in America, Ramanujan wrote about Indian themes. He also shared with the readers his experiences, beliefs and ideas that were ingrained in him since his childhood. A.K. Ramanujan taught Dravidian Linguistics at the University of Chicago for a substantial period of time. Ramanujan's contemporary R. Parthasarthy lived abroad for a while and then came back to India. Hence his poems are influenced by both, western and Indian ideas. His writings focus on Indian and European attitudes and their complexities. Ramanujan and Parthasarthy show concern and love for their Tamil heritage. Parthasarthy's works include Poetry from Leeds (1968, edited with J.J. Healy), Ten Twentieth – Century Indian Poets (1976, ed.) and a volume of verses – Rough Passage (1977). Gieve Patel is another poet who can be clubbed with this group. A doctor by profession he wrote Poems (1966) and How Do You Withstand. Body (1976).

His works focus mainly on physical pain and unpleasant realities around him. M.K. Naik writes about him: A strong sense of compassion establishes, for him some kind of a bond between himself and the under-privileged (Naik.204) In his poems. Patel's sensitiveness finds echoes in the poems of Jayanta Mahapatra who talks about the life of the people of Orissa. "Indian myth and ritual, dreams and identity" (King: 196) are well reflected in poems like Close the sky, Ten by Ten (1971), Svayamvara and Other Poems (1971), Waiting (1979), Relationship (1980). Relationship won for him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981. Written in an ironic tone, some of his poems deal with the themes of love and sex. Modern poetic fervour finds more prominence in the works of Keki N. Daruwalla. He is one of those few writers who have published their literary works at regular intervals. The sociopolitical conditions of cities and small towns are portrayed conspicuously in his works. He discusses violence, misery, deprivation and death in a satirical manner. His volumes of poems are Under Orion (1970), Apparition in April (1971) and Crossing of Rivers (1976). Sword and Abyss (1979) is a collection of short stories. The contribution of poets writing in English from 1960 onwards is a "... significant contribution in that it is a legitimate expression of universal, human experience." (Parthasarthy.11) Like Ramanujan, Shiv K. Kumar, broadened the scope of Indian Writings in English. His poetry reveals a grip over the confessional mode. He also makes use of irony. He has displayed western themes and locales in his works thereby enriching Indian English Literature. Some of the works of Shiv K. Kumar are Articulate Silences (1970), Cobwebs in the Sun (1974), Subterfuges (1976) and (Woodpecker (1979). Another writer, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra began his literary career with Bharatmata: a prayer (sic) (1966), Woodcuts on Paper (1967), Poems/Poems/Poemas (1971) and Nine Enclosures (1976). Pritish Nandy's works project the traumatic conditions of modern life. Some of his collections of verses are Of Gods and Olives (1967), The Poetry of Pritish Nandy (1973) and Tonight, This Savage Rite (1977). Another writer of great eminence in Arun Kolatkar. He won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for a sequence of 31 poems – Jeiuri (1976). The social and cultural milieu is very well brought out in his works. Same is true for the works of Keshav Malik. He wrote The Lake Surface and Other Poems (1959). Ripple Shadow (1960). etc.

The modern Indian writers have remained close to their environment. Their memories, values, details of events and social realities are well addressed in their works. They are frank in revealing their sorrows, struggles, love-hate encounters, frailties, frustrations and fears. They face the realities

of life with boldness. Their poetry reveals varied areas of experience. Like other domains, Indian English Literature too remained male-dominated until women writers showed their caliber and expressed feelings, emotions and conflicts through different modes of imagery. In preindependence era there were a few women writers like Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt but after independence and especially, from 1960s onwards, women writers displayed their literary caliber. They expressed their agony and emotional dilemma in their writings. Writers like Kamala Das, Eunice De Souza, Mamta Kalia, Monika Verma, Gauri Deshpande have received wide acclaim and respectability. From poetry, when one turn to prose, one realizes that the social reality is very well portrayed in the novels of many Indian writers. Bhabani Bhattacharya, a great novelist, received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967 for his novel *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966). He believes, “ a novel must have a social purpose. It must place before the reader something from the society’s point of view.” (Joshi: 3) His novels *So Many Hungers* (1947) and *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1953) deal with subjects like “. . .famine and caste (they) evoke a genuine flow of feeling, even if it is too generalized and apt to swamp character and event.” (Walsh: 101) His other novel is *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978) and collections of short stories – *Indian Cavalcade* (1948) and *Steel Hawk* (1968). Another writer, Manohar Malgaonkar faces reality with great courage and responsibility. He admires “. . .military virtues, coherent characters, performing orthodox roles, narrative gusto, and neat plots, often with a historical background.” (Walsh: 101) His works are *Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princes* (1963), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), *The Devil’s Wind* (1972) and collections of short stories – *A Toast in Warm Wine* (1974), *Bombay Beware* (1975) and *Rumble – Tumble* (1977). The images of social reality are further portrayed in the works of Khushwant Singh. *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and *I shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) gave him immense popularity. The two novels focus on the ill-effects of the partition. In his collections of short stories – *The Mark of Vishnu and other Stories* (1950). *The Voice of god and other Stories* (1957). *A Bride For Sahib and Other Stories* (1967) and *Black Jasmine* (1971) he satirizes values and norms of modern Indian Life. Besides, he has written a collection of Essays *Khushwant Singh India: A Mirror for its Monster and Monstrosities* (ed. Rahul Singh, 1969). Another writer who wrote on East-West dichotomy is G.V. Desani. His novel *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) is “. . .the story of the hero’s spiritual quest for understanding the meaning of life.” (Naik: 226) The theme of alienation has been very effectively portrayed in the works of the novelist Arun Joshi. He began writing in the 1960s and made his mark very soon. Some of his works are *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) and *The Apprentice* (1974) and also a collection of short stories – *The Survivor* (1975). His heroes “. . .are intensely self- centred persons prone to self-pity and escapism.” (M.K. Naik: 229) Chaman Nahal also wrote on the theme of partition and East-West encounter. He is a “. . .novelist of painful odysseys presented in different contexts.” (M.K.Naik : 281) In 1977, he won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *Azadi* (1975). His other works are *My True Faces* (1973), *Indo Another Dawn* (1977), *The English Queens* (1979) and collection of short stories – *The Weird Dance and Other Stories* (1965).

### Conclusion

It is unfortunate that writings in the field of critical studies have not kept a brisk pace. In the British era, an Indian Critical Canon was never formulated. However, after independence, critical analysis of texts and writers began to appear. The critical works written during postindependence era are K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar’s *Indian Writing in English* (1962). *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* (ed.) M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai and G.S. Amur (1968, 1972 and 1977) and David Mc Cutchion’s *Indian Writing in English: Critical Essays* (1968). Other critical works are M.K. Naik’s *Aspects of Indian Writing in English. Essays in Honour of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar* (1979), C. D. Narasimhaiah’s (ed.) *Indian Literature of the Past Fifty years* (1990). Besides critical works, various anthologies, articles, journals, periodicals and magazines have constantly motivated young and inspiring writers to come up with their literary accounts. The Indian writers have gained recognition and fame not only in India but all over the world. Men of literary taste, outside India, have admired the literary expression

of Indian writers. The writer has been honoured with many prestigious and distinguished awards like The Nobel Prize, The Commonwealth Prize, The Booker Prize. There have been other writers who have shot into prominence after 1980s and whose writings have enriched the Indian English Literature. These writers are Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukherjee, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitav Ghosh, Gita Mehta, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Githa Hariharan. These writers have given a new dimension to Indian writings in English. These “New writers” of the 1980s have shown great interest in writing not only about India but also about the “United Urban World”. (Prasad: 23) Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, Amitav Ghosh’s *Circle Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*. Alan Sealey’s *Trotter Nama*, Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English August: An Indian Story* and *The Last Burden*, Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*, Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate*, *A Suitable Boy* and *An Equal Music*, Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Vikram Chandra’s *Love and Longing in Bombay* have achieved wide acclaim and appraisal. The Indian writers of 1980s and 90s have managed to evolve a set of ideas which reflect the growing discontent of the modern Indian youth. Modern India is Janus-faced: one face looks back at the traditions and the other face looks forward with anxious anticipation to the changes that are coming over her. These Indian writers have won global recognition. The wide applause has encouraged Indian writers to write with utter sincerity and maturity.

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