

The Development of Literary Genre in Indian English Literature

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the important development of Literary Genres of Indian Literature. Indian writing in English is a remarkable area in the world Literature. There are gradual improvement in the literary terms and forms. The growth of Poetry and the progress of Drama are observed in this article. The various themes and policies were followed by many writers. The pre-independent writers were pioneer of Indian English Literature. The partition theme was portrayed by historical post-independent writers. The poetry implemented by Nissim Ezekiel, P.Lal, Dom Moraes, K.N.Daruwala, Jayant Mahapatra, A.K.Ramanujan, A.K.Mehrotra, KamalaDas, R.Parthasarathy, Keshav Malik, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Pritish Nandy, Gouri Deshpande, Adil Jusawala, Shiv K.Kumar, Gieve Patel. Indian English poetry has a pan Indian base and readers all over the country. The Indian English poet is concerned with Indianness of his experience. The development of drama also discussed briefly with pre and post independent authors.

Keywords: propaganda, nostalgia, melancholy, passion, forerunner and Indo- Anglian novel

Indian English Literature can be considered as a natural outcome of the introduction and propagation of English education in India under the British rule. It has carved a niche for itself in world literature today. Indian writing in English is a outstanding voice in which India addresses the world today. The following words of Sri Aurobindo bear ample testimony to the special status enjoyed by Indian English literature.

It is not true in all cases that one can't write first class things in a learned language. Both in French and English people to whom the language was not native have done remarkable work, although that is rare. What about Jawaharlal's autobiography? Many English critics think it first-class in its own kind; of course he was educated in an English public school, but I suppose he was not born to that language. Some of Toru Dutt's poems, Sarojini's, Harin's have been highly placed by good English critics, and I don't think we need be more queasy than Englishmen themselves...., If first-class excludes everything inferior to Shakespheare and Milton, that is another matter. I think, as time goes on, people will become more and more polyglot and these mental barriers will begin to disappear. (25)

There is a body of writing is the creation of the gifted Indian writers and it has overcome many limitations and achieved commendable results in a foreign medium.

The renaissance in modern Indian literature was ushered in by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was a master of English prose and his influence is also largely responsible for the sprouting of Indian writing in English in the years that followed.

The post Independence poetry is typically modern with its own distinct features. Indian English poets of this period came to the scene after the nineteen sixties. The poets like Nissim Ezekiel, P.Lal, Dom Moraes, K.N.Daruwala, Jayant Mahapatra, A.K.Ramanujan, A.K.Mehrotra, KamalaDas, R.Parthasarathy, Keshav Malik, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Pritish Nandy, Gouri Deshpande, Adil Jusawala, Shiv K.Kumar, Gieve Patel contributed significantly to post Independence period in English poetry.

Indian English poetry can be divided into three stages precisely. First, early Indian English poetry, Indian English poetry after the first freedom struggle till Independence and post Independence period in Indian English poetry. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio is the notable first Indian English poet. He had a very short poetic career of hardly six years. His short poems revealed a striking influence of English romantic poets in theme, sentiment, imagery and diction. He had reasonable poetic talent.

Rajnarain Dutt, Shoshee Chunder Dutt and Hur Chunder Dutt made their contributions to Indian English poetry. Michael Madhusudan Dutt is famous Indian poet who made Scott and Byron as his models. During this period of Indian English literature only a limited contribution was made by Indian English writers. British rule was considered as a positive influence by the writers of this period. However the first Indian freedom struggle of 1857 was responsible for bringing in new ideas.

The Dutt family album published in 1870 is the first leading poetry work in the history of Indian English Poetry in the period of freedom struggle, from 1857-1950. This collection of poems by the Dutt brothers dealt with Christian sentiment, nature, Indian history and legend.

It is Toru Dutt who lifted Indian poetry from imitation to reality. She showed her skill in using different forms like Ballad, Blank verse and Sonnet. Her poetry has the quality of originality

Sri Aurobindo is well known as poet, critic and thinker. He has beautifully articulated narrative poems to his credit like *Urvashi* and *Love and Death*. His other poems *Thought the Paraclete* and *The Rose of God* are examples of mystical poems. His *Savitri* is considered an example of epic poetry. He has been called Milton of India.

Rabindranath Tagore was a poet, dramatist, novelist and short story writer who enriched Indian life remarkably. He was awarded the Noble prize for literature for his *Geethanjali*. His verse in English had great lyrical quality and the rhythm of free verse.

Sarojini Naidu was notable poet known for *The Golden Threshold.*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing*. He has made her significant contribution towards Indian English poetry.

Harindranath chattopadhyay was a another notable poet who belonged to this period. A devotional note as well as belief in Marxist ideology can be identified in many of his poems. He was an idealist and a seeker of spiritual truth. He published collections of poems like *The Feast for Youth*, *Virgins and Vineyards*, *The Magic Tree*, *Poems and Plays* and *Spring in Winter*. He dealt with romantic themes like nostalgia, melancholy, passion for beauty and changing moods of love. This period of Indian English literature shows a certain degree of progress. The identity of India was rediscovered even though the literature imitated the west to a certain extent.

The period after 1950 is known as the post Independence period of Indian poetry. Like the literatures of America, Australia and Canada, Indian English literature was also subject to the inevitable British literature. Gradually the poetry of the post Independence period was able to give up the influence of the west. The poetry of this period took into account the belief, values and customs of the society. Reality was presented by replacing the conventional poetic language with the colloquial language. The first modern anthology of poems *Modern Indo- Anglian poetry* appeared in 1958, was edited by P.Lal and K.Ranghavendra Rao.

Nissim Ezekiel(1924-2003) is considered to be the father of modern English poetry. His publications are *A Time to Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Hymns in Darkness* (1976) and *Latter Day Psalms* (1984). He was the poet of situation and human beings and he wrote with minute observations. He displayed humanity and Irony in his poems. Alienation is the major theme of his works. He also dealt with themes like obsessive sense of failure, self doubt, love, marriage and art. A very high level of technical skill is revealed in Nissim Ezekiel's poetry.

Dom Moraes (b.1938) is a new poet with due recognition in England. His published volumes of poetry include *A Beginning* (1957), *Poems* (1960), *John Nobody* (1968), *His Poems 1955-1965* (1966) and his *Collected Poems* (1969). He was influenced by surrealism and Dylan Thomas.

Adil Jussawala tried to become an English poet following the footsteps of Dom Moraes with his first collection of poems *Land's End*. However his next volume *Missing Person* shows him emerge as a typical Indian poet, aware of contemporary social and political realities. In

Missing Person there is a mixture of public and private worlds and the important theme is exile. In fine, he is a poet of loneliness and alienation.

A.k.Ramanujam is an outstanding poet of the 1960s. He wrote in Tamil and Kannada. His works *The Indian Landscape* (1967) and *Speaking of Siva* (1972) are translations into English. Though he has settled in America, his poetry comes out of Indian experiences and sensibilities with his memories of family, local places, images, belief and history. His Indianness as the poet is remarkable in terms of Indian myths, history, culture, heritage and environment. His narrative techniques make use of exact and vivid images. His love poems project depth of emotions and perceptions. The volume of his poetry include *The Striders* (1966), *Relations* (1967), *Second Sight* (1976). *The collected poems of A.K.Ramanujam* (1995) and *Prose of A.K.R.amanujam* (2001) were published after his death.

Kamala Das was one of the remarkable women poets of this period and she wrote in English and Malayalam. Her published books of verse in English include *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendents* (1967), *The Old Play House and other Poems* (1973) and *Stranger Time* (1977). She wrote in a frank and confessional mode. Her autobiography *My Story* is considered to be a controversial but a thoroughly frank confession of her life. Her writings reveal her quest for true love. They also reveal the protest against patriarchy and her support for the liberated women.

The Indian English poetry learned from West by the way of imitation and assimilation. Post Independence poetry in Indian English was able to establish its identity. The quality and quantity are also worth mentioning. It has made its own place in world literature and future of Indian poetry in English is also encouraging.

Drama has long history in India which goes back to the ancient times. Its journey started with the Sanskrit plays. The origin of Indian drama can be traced back to the Vedic period. The leading dramatists of ancient periods were Ashwagosh, Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa, Harsha, Bhavbhuti, and Vishakhadatta. Tragedies like *Urubandha*, romances like *Abhijnana- sakuntalam* and historical plays like *Mudrarakshas* were the famous works produced by the dramatists of the Vedic period. Sanskrit literature is divided into two categories. Drishya, that can be seen, and the Sravya, that can be heard and drama comes in the category of Drishya or what can be seen.

The Indian English drama is believed to have made its first began appearance in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the British Empire to establish its power in India. The publication of Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Persecuted* in 1813 marked the beginning of Indian English drama. It is a social play portraying the conflict between the East and West. However the real journey of Indian English drama started with Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization* was published in 1871. His plays *Ratnavali* (1859) and *Sermista* (1859) written in Bengal were translated into English. It was in the twentieth century that Indian English drama began to flourish. The pre-Independence period shows the emergence of great playwrights like Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh, T.P.Kailasam, A.S.P.Ayyar, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Bharathi Sabarmathi. Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya are known as the 'Big Three' in early Indian English drama.

Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature and was considered the great promoter of Indian spiritual heritage. He wrote in Bengali but most of his plays were translated into English by himself as well as others. His famous plays *Chitra*, *Sacrifice*, *The Post Office*, *Muktadhra*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *The King of Dark Chambers* are good examples of Indian philosophy. Tagore was the first to use symbolism and allegorical significance as a technique in

the plays. He also combined the Indian and Western literary traditions to present a blending of East and West. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for *Githanjali*.

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was a major Indian English dramatist. The interesting features of his plays include the variety of the period starting from ancient Greek to medieval India and diverse lands like Iraq, Syria, India, Spain, Britain and Norway. His major themes are the idea of human evolution and love. *Perseus the Deliverer*, *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Prince of Edur*, *Eric*, *Vavadutta* and *Savitri* are his notable plays.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya provided a new dimension to Indian English drama. Deeply influenced by the progressive Writers' Movement his sympathies were for the underdogs like Mulk Raj Anand. His social plays highlight his ideas of revolution and the social evils are presented through symbols.

The plays written during the pre-Independence phase were mostly short plays and even the few lengthy plays were not in prose and also did not prove to be successful. Most of the playwrights of this phase did not write with an awareness that plays are meant to be staged

The pre-Independence phase had a large number of the writers and they preferred to write short plays. Social issues were the main themes in the plays of this period. There were also plays dealing with legendary and historical themes. *Perseus the Deliverers* by Sri Aurobindo is a play in which the theme was taken from ancient myths and legends and interpreted in terms of a contemporary social problem. Regarding models and techniques most of the dramatists copied the Elizabethan model.

The post-Independence period Indian English drama did not make noteworthy progress. There were efforts to promote Indian English drama but they were not very fruitful. Institutions

like National School of Drama were established in Delhi. Centres for training in and dramatic art were also started. The National Drama Festival was also started in Delhi by the Sangeet Naatak Akademi. However these developments promoted the growth of drama in the regional languages only.

Writers like Nissim Ezekiel, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Dattani made remarkable contributions to the Indian English drama and Indian theatres. Nissim Ezekiel wrote six plays on the theme of hollowness of Indian middle class, the futility of social mores and the institutions of marriage. His *The Three plays* (1969), includes *Nalini*, a comedy in three acts, *Marriage Poems*, a one act tragic comedy and *The Sleepwalkers* an Indo-American farce. *Song of Derivation* is a one act comic morality play dealing with the themes of suppression and repression. *Nalini* is about the hollowness of life of two advertising executives. In all the three plays Ezekiel projects the cross section of contemporary society.

Girish Karnad received the Jnanpith Award and he is a leading figure in contemporary Indian English drama. He is a dramatist, actor, critic and a film star with international repute. He speaks about his playwriting in the following words

I have been fairly lucky in having a multi- pronged career. You know I have been an actor, a publisher, a film maker. But none of these I felt quite as much at home as in playwriting. (kamala 14)

His plays *Tuglaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, *Tale Danda* and *The Fire and the Rain* have been translated into English. *Tuglaq* and *Hayavadana* were translated by Karnad himself. His themes are taken from myths, legends, folktales and history. Classical, folk, Western dramatic techniques are combined in his plays.

Vijay Tendulkar can be considered as the forerunner of modern Indian English drama. He presents the conflicts between the individual and the society in his plays. As he reveals the darker side of the society, his plays are considered controversial also. His plays are *Silence: The Court is in Session*, *Kamala*, *The Vultures*, *Sakharam Binder*. The main theme of his plays is male domination, exploitation of women, violence and rejection of social norms.

Mahesh Dattani is an outstanding playwright. He has given a new direction to Indian English drama. He has written several plays with different themes, tones and treatment. He got the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his contribution to Indian drama in 1988. He deals with serious and sensitive issues like communalism, homosexuality, female infanticide, child sexual abuse, domestic abuse and the condition of eunuchs in Indian society and he makes it clear in his preface to collected plays.

I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally. (Dattani 20)

In 1986 he wrote his first play *Where There is a Will*. After that he wrote the plays *Tara*, *Bravely Fought The Queen*, *Final Solutions* and *Dance Like A Man* with social issues being highlighted. Dattani is considered as a bold and innovative writer.

When compared to the plays of the pre-Independence period, the plays of the post-Independence period revealed a great influence of the West. There was an emphasis on psycho analysis of the character and the use of realistic language in the post Independence period. The themes included the contemporary social problems and the conflicts between the old and new

trends. However Indian English drama has not achieved much when compared to the progress of other genres.

The novel is comparatively a modern form of art and emerged only after the democratic periods had influenced the European society. The Renaissance and Reformation had a great role in removing the old social and religious conventions. And this paved the way for the growth of individuality. In the Indian scene also the spirit of individuality and human dignity led to the rise and growth of the novel as an art form. Humayun Kabir's comment is relevant here.

The new middle classes stress individuality and human dignity. It is natural that their major literary form, the novel should deal with ordinary men as opposed to the princes and princelings who were heroes of earlier tales. Because the novel deals with ordinary men, a novelist must possess the power of acute observation which enables him to distinguish one individual from another. (Kabir 1)

Middle classes became a powerful social factor. The scientific temper and democratic spirit helped challenging the traditional views. Science and technology increased the phase of change and the exploitation of knowledge was brought all around.

Indian English novel had its origin about a century and half. It has struck deep roots in the Indian geographical climate and cultural ethos. In its origin it is related to the English novel tradition because of the influence of the colonial rule. In 1772 Charles Grant, one of the directors of the East India company made a strong plea for making English language the medium for importing western ideas. This plea was realized with the active support of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord Macaulay.

The historic minute of Macaulay which was prepared in 1835 was responsible for adoption of English language as the medium of instruction in Indian schools and colleges. The introduction of English language was expected to open up fresh avenues of thought and culture, art and literature and technology. It was strongly supported by progressive thinkers.

The introduction of English education and the knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of English language was a strong incentive to the growth and expansion of English in India.

The spread of English created a favourable environment for the growth and development of Indian narrative in English as well as Indian languages. This story telling tradition became active with the exposure to English. As the middle classes consolidated their position in India the novel also emerged as a new genre. It was in the presidency of Bengal that the novel first made its appearance as a distinct literary genre. The novel made its appearance in the presidencies of Madras and Bombay later. The emergence and growth of Indo-Anglian novel also led to the emergence of more criticism.

In India the novel made its appearance with the growth of the middle classes. This first took place in Bengal and it was in Bengali that the novel emerged for the first time as a literary form. Novel writing either in English or in the India languages started in the second half of the nineteenth century. *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (The Spoilt child) is considered to be the first Indian novel and it was written in Bengali in 1858. However the credit for creating a popular taste for the novel goes to Bakim Chandra Chatterjee . He wrote the first Indo- Anglian novel *Raj Mohan's Wife*, was published in 1864. During his life time he had become a legend but his early work is not properly remembered. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments

His English novel *Raj Mohan's Wife* is forgotten by everyone today except the researcher in the Indian novel in English, nor is there any evidence that it had much impact when it was first serialized. It is a trite and meandering story of a beautiful woman adducted by a villainous man of stormy nights and dark dungeons. Yet two years later, the same man took Bengal by the storm with his first novel *Dargesh Nandhini* which had unprecedented success when translated into the other Indian languages. It was very different in scope from his earlier and tame English effort where he was caught between the Victorian model of realistic fiction and pull towards the Gothic. (Mukarjee 7)

Time factor is very significant for the historical novel to emerge. Novel more than any other genre is capable of containing large, developed, and consistent images of people.

Philip Stevick rightly observes

The novel, also more than any other genre, can give form to a set of attitudes regarding society, history, history, and the general culture of which the novel is a part, and this too is a reason for reading novels; but the criticism which result from this motive runs the danger of treating fiction as a document, evaluating it less as art than as cultural exhibit and ideological force.(21)

K.R.Shirwadkar comments

In *The Serpent and the Rope* Raja Rao tries to define the concept of Indian identify and the novel becomes a spiritual history of the hero-narrator Rama Swamy. The concept of identify is based on the traditional notion of Brahmanism courageously confronting the greater challenges of science, communism and psycho-analysis from all over the world.(38)

The historical novelists like Chaman Nahal, Khushwant Singh and Salman Rushdie contributed their involvement in literature through their artistic writings of partition novels. Their performance takes Indian English Literature to zenith. The Indian novelists and women novelists achieved fame through their excellent writings.

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