



A BRIEF CULTURAL HISTORY OF INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

VIVEK HEBBALE

RESEARCH SCHOLAR SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR

DR. ASHOK KUMAR

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR

ABSTRACT

When we speak of Indian English poetry we speak of something big, something mega so as it absorbs almost everything what we come across. Perhaps, it would be more appropriate to say 'what is not in Indian English Poetry?' 'Indian English Poetry is the treasure house of true Indian cultures, ethos and mythos. The colorful Indian life from one extreme to that of the other is placed and arranged masterly in Indian English Poetry. It is one of the most important literary developments in the subcontinent after colonization, which is an outstanding source of Indian English variety rich in depiction of Indian ethos, mythos and sensibility. Broadly speaking Indian English poetry is one of the branches of Indian English Literature the understanding of which is imperative for the better disposition of Indian English poetry. Indian English Literature is roughly divided into two phases' viz., pre-independence phase and post-independence phase which explain the development of Indian writings in English. This paper shall focus on the progress of Indian English Literature in general and Indian English Poetry in particular during the pre-independence and post-independence phases.

Keywords: - English, Indian, Poetry, Literature, Indianness.

I. INTRODUCTION

English literature has influenced the Indians since colonization. The British rule over India added a new chapter in Indian history that was going to make a significant change in the coming times. If on the one hand Indians were administrated by the British but at the same time it became the source of enlightenment in the field of both science and literature. After getting inspired and influence by the English language Indian writers started to write in this alien language. Indian English Literature covers all the forms of writings i.e. poetry, prose, biographies, history, novels, essays etc. initially the Indian English Literature was not different from that of the British however with the passage of time it emerged as a different class of writing. Poetry written in English by the Indian poets developed from mere copying to a class where it attained its

uniqueness. Indian English Poetry has its unique mystic and spiritual essence. The development of Indian English Poetry can be studied in two phase's viz., Pre-Independence and Post-Independence Phase. Indian English Literature is the product of hard labor of all those Indians who wrote in English language, which was not their native language but an alien one. Not only this, there is an equal share of those great Indian origin writers (settled abroad) who spread the beautiful Indian culture to the west. Indian English literature encompasses all what was/is written by Indian writers in English, living here in India & abroad. This literature includes poetry, novels, letters, articles, essays etc. Indian English Literature has not always been so sophisticated and polished what we see today, the beginners had to face hardships however, with the passage of time the birth of Independent form of Indian writing in English took place. Indian writers not only mastered in the field of poetry but also in the field of prose writing. Indian English poetry is very rich in expressions of Indianness, its culture, politics, ethos any mythos. After colonization Indian English Poetry emerged as one of the most important developments in the world of literature. Indian English Poetry spread the musk of Indian ethos, mythos and sensibility to the world of west.

II. PRE-INDEPENDENCE PHASE

India is a multi-lingual county each one has its own individual history and literature making influence on culture and society, the colors of which we see in the Indian poetry. India under the colonial rule no doubt struggled hard for their identity but at the same time under the colonial influence Indian society got introduced to the world of new ideas through the portals of English literature. During the colonial period Indian literature got influenced by the western society culturally, politically and socially. The western education influenced Indians which resulted in gradual adaptation of western culture. Pre-Independence Indian English writing was the outcome of the cross – fertilization of two cultures – Indian and English. English came to India as the representative of bourgeois culture, art and democracy. Commence The publication of Henry Derozio's poetry titled 'Poems' in the year 1827 is the beginning of Indian English Poetry. He was an inspiration for all those young Indian lover of English language. Besides his great art of composing a nice piece of poetry he was someone who had a deep and true love for his country, his sonnets 'The Harp of India', 'To India- My Native Land', 'My Country in the Day of GloryPast' express his ardent love for Indianness:

“My country! In thy day of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow’
And worshipped as a deity thou wast.
Where is the glory, where that reverence now?”

The first quarter of the 19th century was the period of incubation for Indo–Anglian poetry and Derozio was the moving spirit then.” The poets of this period include poets like KashiprasadGhosh, Gooroo Churn Dutt, Raj NarainDutt, Michael MadhusudanDutt and ShosheeChunderDutt occupy an important position during the second quarter of the 19th century.

III. POST-INDEPENDENCE PHASE:

It is not difficult to differentiate pre-independence poetry from post-independence poetry, as the post-independence poets have freed themselves from the clutches of “Englishness” and have started writing in a very Indian manner. The poets in this period have started to express themselves freely in an Indian manner, word borrowing is one of the characteristics of their poetry. We can see the pure Indian words being used very beautifully in English poetry by the Indian poets of this phase. Bruce King rightly says: “English is no longer the language of colonial rulers, it is a language of modern India in which words and expressions have recognized national rather than imported significances, alluding to local realities, traditions and ways of feeling. Such Indianisation has been proceeding for several generations”

The periods after independence was the phase of experimentation. “The third is the experimental phase, which begins after the Independence. There has been a conspicuous outbreak of poetic activity demanding the urgency of national self-definition and reflecting a painful heart-searching.

Rajyalaxmi said:

Our models have been neither exclusively Indian nor British, but cosmopolitan. Europe, Africa, America and Asia have all become a part of our cultural consciousness, offering impetus and stimulation. Our poets have been suddenly lifted from an exclusive to an extensive range of creative experience. They have been raised from a conservative to a cosmopolitan culture, to confront the new shape of things and acquire a new view of human destiny. The age has changed and requires a new image. This has been largely met by the poet”

Another development in the post-independence poetry was the rise of female poetic voice. Women poets were becoming the voice of those women maltreated by the society. Post-Independence English poetry was a sort of revolt against the old one as the poet’s turned self-critics. These poets were past, present and future oriented.

Thus it won’t be wrong to say that post-independence poetry is a new genre to which even the English readers look with curiosity. There are number of Indian English poets who have played a vital role in popularizing the Post-Independence Indian English Poetry.

IV. MARXISM IN INDIAN POETRY

If one starts journey through the gallery of post-independence Indian English poetry, one observes a considerable influence of Marxism on the Indian Literature and obviously Indian literature in English equally. KunwarNarain admits this reality and says in an interview:

Marxism in 50’s and 60’s was a powerful influence on world literature. Its emphasis on grassroots realities, on socio-economic and political educations of human poverty and

exploration focused the much needed attention in the problems of common man-that his anguish could be alleviated by effective political, social and economic action seemed to bring the great utopian dream within reach.(Interview)

In the similar tone V.K. Gokak admits Marxism as ‘the only Western aesthetic theory that has not yet mixed with oriental aesthetics...’ and for this reason Gokak pleads that ‘the Marxist believes in the determinism of matter and on that basis seeks to explain all aesthetic phenomena’. Gokak acknowledges Marx as an essential branch of knowledge for understanding social and political phenomenon.

V. LITERARY JOURNEY

The journey of Indian literature commences from the social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy who protested firstly against the exploitation of woman and advocated the rights of press in his writings as well as actions and movements. According to M. K. Naik, Roy wrote A Defense of Hindu Theism which was ‘the first and original publication in the history’. Later on Henry Derozio (1808-31) who wrote first original poetry in English was less social conscious but more patriotic. Derozio and Kashiprasad set the tone for the love of India which was followed by Toru Dutt, R.N. Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, M.M. Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Goroo Chand Dutt and R.C. Dutt. Similarly the first quarter of twentieth century followed Romanticism, Victorianism. Poets like ‘Meherji, A.F. Khabardar, N.B. Thadhani, Nizam Jung, Harendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, and Ananda Acharya exploited Indian and oriental thought in the typical Indian manner’. The second quarter of twentieth century led a rich harvest of poets like ‘V.N. Bhushan, S.R. Dongerkery, T.P. Kailasam, N. Krishna Murti and A. Menezes’ continued the humanistic trend while Nolini Kant Gupta, Dilip Kumar Roy, E.L. Vaswani, Nirodvaran K.D. Sethna, Nishi Kanto, and Themis carried forward the tradition of mystical poetry. ‘The third quarter of 20th century has seen the further strengthening of modernist as well as new symbolist’s trend’. Here the poets published from ‘Writers Workshop’ like, P. Lal, Kamala Das, V.D. Trivedi, Marry Erulkar, A.K. Ramanujan and several others seem to reveal significant development modernist lines in Indo-Anglian poetry’. The age from 1922 to 1947 can easily be called the age of indianness as all the writings of this period were either glorifying the rich heritage of India or admonishing her decline, but there was no upsurge of protest in the poems of that time as the people of this period were (under Colonialism) struggling for freedom of nation or dazzled by the light of industrial revolution. But few poets cum social reformers protested against the social evils and ills that had taken birth in the medieval age.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus it is the direct influence of the people of the west (Englishmen) under whose influence the English Literature paved way to what is known as Indian English Literature. The direct influence of English Literature under the colonial rule inclined a class of Indian people to learn and explore

the western literature which ultimately inspired them to adopt and write in this alien language (English). Not only had this western literature exposed the Indians to the new medical and scientific age which also attracted the attention of the learned Indian class.

The initial writing of Indian English writers was mere imitation of the western art form of the novel. At this phase of time an Indian English writer couldn't be differentiated for that of the British one, the reason being the direct influence of the British and the readers were mostly the British or those Indians who were Indian in flesh&blood but British in taste. Gradually Indian English writers freed& liberated themselves from the influence of the west and wrote purely in their own essence. Indian English Poetry shifted from imitative to assimilative to experimental phase. The pre-independence and post-independence phases play a vital role in the Indian English Poetry in a way of its development as a distinct genre. Indian English Poetry from the times of Henry Derozio's till present has crossed all the barriers and reached to the level where even the British look at it with curiosity. Without knowing about the author one cannot say if it's written by the native English speaker of an Indian.

REFERENCES:-

1. Katyal, Anjum, ed.(2006) "One Hundred Poems for Peace." Calcutta: Seagull Books.
2. Eagleton, Terry. (2006) 'Literature and History', Marxism and Literary Criticism. New York: Routledge Classic, II Rep.
3. Dwivedi, A. N. Protest Poems. (2006)Kolkata: Writers Workshop. (Abbreviated as PP in the text).
4. IyengarSrinivasa, K.R. (2014). Indian Writing in English. Sterling Publishers. New Delhi.
5. Khatri, C.L. and Arora, Sudhir.K. (2010). Indian English Poetry: A Discovery. Aadi Publications, Jaipur India.
6. Rajani, Leena and Mehta, Dipti H. (2014). Pre – Independence Indian English Poetry. Indian J. Appl. Res. 4 (2).