



## ROLE OF LITERATURE IN IMAGINING THE NATION

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### ABSTRACT

*In the present scenario the ideas of nation, identity and entitlement are undergoing far reaching reconfiguration. This has the potential to impact our individual and social existence in fundamental ways. The reconfiguration has an impact on our understanding of culture, education and democracy and their interrelatedness. A nation that was imagined on the foundation of the notions of liberalism and secularism has to now be content with alternative and conflicting notions of nation's identity and entitlement. In the beginning of the nineteenth century Indian writers of literature began to imagine cultural unity through their fictional and poetic works. By 1920 and 1930 literature has come to occupy a central role in the Indian Nationalist movement. This paper is an attempt to trace the present day tension between multiple discourses of power, culture and identity in redefining the provenance of higher education focusing on the differing view and prospective on the crucial notions of democracy, education and the nation.*

**Key words:** English literature in India, Nationalism, Feminist writers, Political, cultural, impact on society, Westernization, education system.

### **Introduction:**

A nation is a soul and a spiritual principle, the only two things that actually, constitute these is the past and the present. First the possession in common of a rich legacy of remembrances; the second is the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the heritage which all hold in common.(1) This definition points us towards the two crucial factors that have resurfaced in the discourse of nationalism practically everywhere in history: a shared past and the will to “live together” under one State .Literature has many roles in society from a modernist perspective it can be transgressive and penetrate the public. Literature can also cultivate empathy and hold the capacity to read the minds of others, in writers thus, it seems like nationalism has managed to sweep even its critics into its own fold. This is also because this strain of anti-colonial but also anti-national thought never really gained much popularity. It was the 'nationalist' movement that became the most potent force in anti-colonial Indian history. But besides understanding that nationalism was not the only anti-colonial vision available in the 20th century it is also important for us to understand at least some of the dimensions of what nationalism meant in the Indian context.(2). An understanding of nation and nationalism is essential in have a right image of the country. Literature portrays various dimensions of the country through the writings of intellectuals and creative people from across the country spread in different time spans.

### **Findings**

There are a number of Indian writers in the past and the present who have immensely contributed for the nation’s development. From the time of colonization, In Indian writers such as Rabindranath Tagore and Mohammed Iqbal there is a definite rejection of the idea of 'nation' as a Western ideal, which is destructive. In an era permeated by nationalism and the need for a nationalist identity Tagore and Iqbal, though in significantly different ways, disputed the very authenticity of the idea of a nation. Strangely enough, Iqbal, who sought to break the legitimacy of the idea of the nation, became known as the national poet of Pakistan.

## Literature on Nationalism

Indian writers like Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali and English and was responsible for the translations of his own work into English. Other early notable poets in English include , Toru Dutt, Derozio Romesh Chunder Dutt, , Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, and Harindranath Chattopadhyay. These writers by way of their poetry have been pivotal in their attempt to liberate the country. They have sowed the seeds of patriotism and freedom that grew into a tree to bear the fruit of liberation. Their impact of words on the people led to a large number of people kindle their spirit of patriotism, to fight for the country. It is the literature of the past that helps us to get a glimpse of the gravity of our struggle for freedom

By the 1920s and 1930s, literature had come to occupy a central role in the Indian nationalist movement that not only reflected the politics of Indian leaders, but questioned some of their assumptions about the path India's future should take. For instance, the Hindi novelist Premchand in his stories about rural India satirized the plotting of the urban selected few, emphasizing the division of rural and urban that was progressively more visible in mainstream nationalist politics. Likewise, Mulk Raj Anand ,the English-language author positioned his stories among the urban poor, highlighting the impact of colonialism and heavy industrialization.

Ulka Anjaria a Ph.D. candidate in the Program of Modern Thought and Literature at Stanford University, discusses the works of Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Manik Bandopadhyay, Bibhutibhushan and Ahmed Ali, relating innovations these authors make on the novel form to larger political developments of the pre-Independence period in her dissertation.[3]

## Feminist writers

The contribution of feminist writers have also helped to liberate women from the clutches of superstitious beliefs and rigid cultural and traditional practices that had handcuffed the women in the past. The patriarchal society refused to educate the women and suppressed their thoughts and individuality . They failed to understand the immense potential a woman possessed that could be used for the progress of not only the family but also the nation at large. Indian women writers, in no particular order of preference or genre who have contributed immensely to the country's

literary scene, and who deserve to be recognized for their vision, their fearlessness, their originality, and the barriers they broke in the literary world and beyond.

To begin with Ilavenil Meena Kandasamy ,currently one of India’s boldest as young voices is a poet whose works are centered on feminism and Caste Annihilation Movement of contemporary Indian background. Kamala Das who wrote beautiful prose in Malayalam and English is also one of India’s finest confession poets, She reflected her strong feminist ideology, portraying female sensibility with a rare honesty and sensitivity and have inspired women who are looking to break the shackles of sexual and domestic oppression, and therefore finds significance with women even today.

Anita Nair has written everything from poems, Short stories, crime fiction to even children stories. She is best known for her novels, where she brought to life the experiences of the everyday Indian woman through fiction. Arundhati Roy, India’s most noted authors and human rights activist, has published a wide range of non-fiction, covering topics from the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan to a denunciation of India’s nuclear tests. Through themes like cultural clashes, alienation, displacement and exile, Kiran Desai makes her work so fascinating. She presents the vast image of our present-day society in the broad perspective of globalization, while Anita Desai’s novels usually gyrate around working out the mystery of the inner life of her characters. She uses stunning visual imagery to show the inner working, and many have compared her modernist sensibilities to writers like William Faulkner, T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf.[4]

Shobha De has written more than a dozen novels till date and the most successful them among them are “Spouse – The Truth About Marriage”, that has sold a million copies. She is best known for her depiction of sex and India’s socialites in her work. Sarojini Naidu, also known by the name The Nightingale of India, was a child prodigy, poet and freedom fighter. The three volumes of her poems, known for their lyricism, symbolism, imagery and mysticism, occupy a place of eminence in the history of Indo-Anglian poetry, She wrote on subjects related to nature, love, life, death and patriotism in her poetry. Urvashi Butalia is said to be the first Indian feminist, author and historian to set up India’s first feminist publishing house, called Kali for Women. This today functions as Zubaan Books, an imprint. Her book named “The Other Side Of

Silence: Voices From The Partition Of India”, deals with stories of thousands of women and children who were killed during and after during the India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Sudha Murthy is also an eminent writer who writes in Kannada and English who draws the experiences of her eventful life. The specialty of her stories is that they revolve around the everyday and are easy to relate to.

### **Literature and society**

Literature has improved the practices of the society and the lifestyles of the people across generations. It provides an understanding of the past. The details of our legendary history and rich heritage are made known to us through literature. The greatness and the valor of our kings, warriors and queens is depicted in our ancient writings. Indian society and political developments were recognized by the Europeans in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Indian society was divided into 7 classes and also mentions the four varna theory of the caste system. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century many translations were made from the Sanskrit literature to Persian by indo Muslim scholars. Jean Baptise Tavernier, a French merchant and traveler describes in detail the various routes and points of interest historically and commercially in his travels in India. Buchanner’s survey and work in Bengal and Bihar was the forerunner of a continuing efforts undertaken by the British in India to collect and publish all aspects- physical, cultural and sociological of every district in India.[5]

Literature has fed our artists with numerous ideas, characters and stories that are dramatized on stage and theatres. For instance our epics of Ramayana and Mahabharatha are visual representations of literature whereby much is learnt and knowledge gained. The dramatization of the stories of king Vikramaditya, Chandragupta Maurya and Chanakya by way of mega serials on Television is a medium through which our historical significance is made known to the tech savvy younger generation.

The recent row over the release of movie Padmavathi has forced people to turn the pages of history and check the literature of the past. People are protesting uphold the dignity of the Rajput queen, but without literature it is not possible to get details of how the dynasty was ruled and what practices were followed at that time.

Literature acts as a Pandora's box when it comes to social cultural political and educational aspects of society. The Indian constitution being the largest written constitution quarentees the wellbeing of all the citizens of democratic India. Our constitution secures the rights of its citizens and renders justice to its people. But the scenario today is that the laws made in the past are irrelevant today. The times have changed and so has the honesty of the people- honesty is replaced with practicality. There is a compromise on the quality of people as they are in a rat race for earning money. The value system in the people has taken a backseat. As a result of all this we are registering a number of criminal activities everywhere.

The modern Indian writers have focused on many social and cultural concerns of the society. The beauty and the brutalities are portrayed in a narrative to bring reality to the forefront. There are numerous instances where women are exploited in the name of religion and customs. Younger generations of poets writing in English include Anuradha Bhattacharyya, G. S. Sharat Chandra, Makarand Paranjape, NandiniSahu, Hoshang Merchant Arundhathi Subramaniam, Jeet Thayil, Ranjit Hoskote, Sudeep Sen, Abhay K, Jerry Pinto, K Srilata, Gopi Kottoor, Tapan Kumar Pradhan, Arnab Jan Deka, Anju Makhija, Robin Ngangom, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Smita Agarwal, Vihang A. Naik and Vivekanand Jha among others. In recent years, English-language writers of Indian origin are being published in the West at an increasing rate. Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Arvind Adiga have won the prestigious Man Booker Prize, with Salman Rushdie going on to win the Booker of Bookers

## **Conclusion**

Education is pivotal in the progress and development of any nation. The future of any country depends on the number of literatures in the country. Literature is used as an effective tool to provide education to the people. A lot can be learnt from the history of our country. The education system must focus to be value based than mere knowledge of subjects . Knowledge without values and high morality cannot create good citizens and promote to the progress of the nation. India is seen as a prospective buyer in the world market as it has the potential to consume various products globally. Globalisation has brought with it western culture and practices that today our country's youth are modern in their lifestyles. They have adopted western culture and fused it with the Indian culture. This could lead to a threat of losing our traditions. It is through

literature that westerners are exposed to the mysticism and sentimental beauty of the Indian culture. Because of their profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse by which with consummate skill, they have made their poetic thought expressed in their own words as part of the literature of the west. It is time that the youth of the nation uphold the pride of the country's heritage wherever they go or live. They are lured with the glamour and glitz of the western world but they must be aware that anywhere in the world, they carry the image of the country which should not be hampered at any cost.

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