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The Glorious Rise of Early Indo-English Poetry in Pre-Independence Epoch – A Sublime Study

Priyanka Loni
Research Scholar
Department of English
KSAWU Vijayapura-586103.
Email: priyankaloni2016@gmail.com

Abstract: Poetry is a written verse which expresses the feelings, emotions, and ideas of a poet in his literary work and in own style and rhythm. In Ancient Indian tradition, Kavya (Poetry) is hailed as equivalent to fifth Veda. Indians have a vast history of traditional arts and have a long directory of poems from various prolific writers which resonates in modern Indian English literature. Indian English poetry has come into the play around 150 years ago, and well matured in this era. The Indian English literature has bifurcated into three phases, and they are Imitative, Assimilative and Experimental. Very few poets in India were well educated before to independence, and they were affected by Victorian and Romantic era works, beginning to repeat the works of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, Swinburne, and others. The approach and tactics of Byron and Scott were echoed by great pioneers such as V Derozio and the Dutt family, respectively. The topic of Indian poetry was heavily dependent on the environment, cultural heritage, nationalism, and so on i.e., highly anthropogenic, and self-styled and were highly nostalgic among themselves of their works in the comparisons to predecessors works. Indian Poet also thought of indigenous reader, so it ought to have a desi appeal which was favorable to all, for them the feature of Indianness made it eye catching. The poet tried to remain natural and honest. Indian English poetry is a mixture of all anglicized variety of different ethnic culture across the globe. This paper shall focus on the Indian English Poetry during the Pre-Independence epoch and conglomerate them and brainstorm their works in details.

Keywords: *Pre-Independence, Kavya, Victorian, Romantic, Ethnic, Nostalgic, Assimilative, Imitative, Resonates, Desi, Anglicized, Conglomerate and Brainstorm.*

Introduction

Poetry is the eternal human existence expressed in verse. Poetry starts with Language with its literature and grammatical background, So the term Indian English literature formally known as “Indo-Anglian” or “Indo-English”. The Indian writing in English can be dated with the arrival of renowned Portuguese sailor cum trader “Vasco-da-Gama” in Kerala in the year 1498 i.e., in the renaissance epoch of

European nations. The Indian English Poetry is the inception of reminiscent romantic verse, melodic rhythmic lyrics in the period of 1820-1900, and is a reminiscence of English romantic and Victorian poets dealt with the Indian or its aligned themes, Indian English poetry is an aroma of two blended brew of British and Indian cultures. When English literature and language first became popular in India, Indian philosophers were inspired by their fiction, drama, and poetry, which stood in stark contrast to Indian works in Sanskrit and regional poems of literature such as prose narrative, Epics, Mythological Drama, ode, sonnet, ballad, and elegy. Poetry in India originated in the British stronghold Bengal area. It was restricted to a small number of Bengali families living in the city during the first fifty years. Afterwards, it spread to other metropolitan areas like Madras and Bombay; Indian poetry written in English is still mostly urban to this day. Men from wealthy backgrounds, known as the Pioneers of Indo-Anglican literature, took on the responsibility of interpreting Indian ethos and culture for Western readers via illustrious works of writing. The clash between traditional, free, inventive thinking, and memories has resulted in the exponential rise of Indian poetry. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a well-known social reformer from Bengal, wrote the earliest English-language literary works. Roy was a progressive supporter of English civilization and culture and wrote a variety of essays and treaties that were collected in entirety. The great pioneers like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, MM Dutt, Swami-Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Women poets like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu works have plethoric contributions in this epoch.

Indian Eminent Poet V.K Gokak has divided the Indo-Anglican Poetry into six phases and are 1825-1850, 1851-1875, 1876-1900, 1901-1925, 1926-1950, 1951-1965. The Epoch from 1876-1925 called as Indo-Anglican Romanticism, most of the eminent philosophers classify the Indian English literature into three phases, and they are Imitative, Assimilative and Experimental. Now let's ponder and brainstorm all the works of respective poets in this pre-independence epoch.

Pre-Independence Poetry Themes

Poetry in English composed during the colonial period, regardless of how imitative or derivative it is, cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Whatever its drawbacks, it includes undeniably excellent works by Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, Tagore and Ghose. Literary history illustrates how the next generation excludes and dismisses the preceding generation, the predecessors. The Indian freedom movement and western romantics shaped the great bulk of early poetry. Derozio, Kashi Prasad Ghose, and the Dutt's all wrote love poetry that emphasized Indian culture and ideals. The subjects were

colourful, such as Indian folklore and myths, epics such as Mahabharata and Ramayana, childhood memories under the Indian sun, and so on. Sarojini Naidu composed romantic poetry mostly, but she also wrote on the distinctive Indian culture and identity. Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose were thinkers and mystics. They included Indian idea of God's oneness, religion, infancy, spirituality, and so on. In fact, they are still the most widely read and renowned Indian English poets.

The Great Pioneers (1820-1900)

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1833): - Henry Derozio was an exemplary in both journalism and poetry. He edited and published The East Indian journal. His finest poetic works published in dual volumes of poetry: The Fakeer of Jungheera is full of Byronic reverberation but expresses his zeal for social reform; The metrical tale and other poems. He was so patriotic for nation and expresses his love in the form of sonnets like “The Harp of India” and “To India my native land.” In the Poem My native Land, He wrote:

“My Country! In the days of glory past

A beauteous halo circled round thy brow.

And worshipped as deity thou wast,

Where is that glory, where is that reverence now?”

According to Critics like C. Paul Varghese he “was the first Indian to attempt Romantic Poetry in English and that he made small start in right direction to give expression to Indian personality through the medium of English”.

Kashi Prasad Ghose (1809-1873): - He was the editor of The Hindu Intelligence, an English weekly. Scott's The Lady of the Last Minstrel had an impact on The Shair and Other Poems (1830). He was one of the first Indians to regularly publish a book of English poems.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1827-1837):- was an Indian artist. In Bengal, he is more renowned as an epochal writer. He longed to be an Englishman from a young age. He began his career as an Indian English poet, and his poetry and sonnets have been devoted to his birthplace. 'The Captive Ladie,' a great metrical romance in which he relates the love story of Prithviraj and Sanyuktha, was his unique achievement, and it is a captivating archetype figure in modern attempt. He was a gifted linguist and

polygot. His works include 'Is this is called a civilization', 'Ratnavali', 'Visions of the Past'. 'Visions of the past', 'poor in poetry' is a poem in Miltonic blank verse, complete with weighty, abstract diction and Latin inversions and shows justification faith in Christianity. Satan, a sonnet imitates Miltonic imagery and simile. In all his poems indicate a high level of sophistication. In his own words:

“Where man in all his truest glory lives,
 And nature’s face is exquisitely sweet;
 For those fair climes I heave impatient sigh,
 There let me live and there let me die.”

Dutt created Indianism and expressed Indian Sentiment and Deshi feelings.

Romesh Chandra Dutt (1848-1909):- A member of I.C.S. was a man of versatile genius and achievements. He was a great master of English prose, and he wrote History of Civilization in Ancient India, Economic History of India, and India in the Victorian Age. Dutt did not compose unique poems as a poet. He translated The Ramayana and The Mahabharata into English verse in a way renowned for its stateliness, dignity, seriousness, epic grandeur, and clarity. He imparted a touch of originality to his translations. He skillfully adopted the metre employed by Tennyson in Locksley Hall in the translations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. In addition, he translated pieces from the Rigveda, Upanishada, Buddhist literature, Kalidasa's Kumarsambhava, and Bharvi's Kiratarjuniya into English. Hymn of the Dying Man and The Himalayas are other Poetic works. In the poem The Himalayas he writes:

“The towering Himalaya rose,
 Surpassing- mighty Meru high.
 To view the limits of wide space,
 Perchance to scale the lofty sky!
 Eternal sunshine on his face,
 His back in ceaseless gloomy night,

Like Siva in dark tusker-skin,
 His face with radiant smiles all bright!
 Dwellers of earth and sky and heaven
 Mutually unseen here dwell;
 This range, itself a perfect world.”

Toru Dutt (1856-1877):- Toru Dutt was a key figure in transforming Indian English poetry from imitation to authenticity. Toru Dutt's tragedy was that she died when she was young, when her talent was still growing.

Toru Dutt travelled to Europe in 1869, spending one year in France and three years in England. A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields, one of her two works, was published a year after her sister's death. With 165 lyrics, this was a wonderful attempt. Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan, her second work, was released posthumously in 1882 and was divided into two portions.

The first section includes Savitri, The Legend of Dhruva, Lakshman, Jogadhyia Uma, The royal Ascetic and The Hind, Buttoo, Sindhu and Prahalad and other characters. These poems dealt with the theme taken from Indian Mythology and reveal Toru's Indianness.

Near Hastings, Baumaree, On the Fly Leaf, Our Casuarina Tree, The Lotus, France-1870, and The Tree of Life The second part consists of Erckmann, Chatrian's works, and Madame Therese. Her own emotions and moods are conveyed in these poems, which also demonstrate how, despite her conversion to Christianity, she had absorbed the real spirit of Hinduism via both her ancestry and her education. She spoke in a romantic, Victorian style. English translations of the Puranic, Mahabharata, and Ramayana have been done by Toru Dutt. 'Our Casuarina Tree,' her most well-known poem, explored themes of transience, memory, and images.

Oates, a Famous critic observes “Her English poetry displayed Original creative and imaginative power and almost flawless technical skill”.

Padmini Sen Gupta calls her “a classic writer” who “placed her country and was the first to do so on the international map of letters”.

Toru Dutt's one of the finest works 'Our Casuarina Tree', and in this she writes: -

“Like a huge Python, winding round and round,
 The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
 Up to its very summit near the stars,
 A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound,
 No other tree could live.”

Rabindranath-Tagore (1861-1941): - Tagore was the first Indian writer to secure contemporary India's place on the international literary map. He mostly wrote in Bengali, which he eventually translated into English. He who gave the title 'Mahatma' to M.K. Gandhi i.e., 'Father of our Nation', Mahatma Gandhi referred to him as 'The Great Sentinel'. Tagore was a brilliant poet, writer, painter, patriot, educator, novelist, and playwright. In 1912, Tagore began his career as an Indian English poet. Tagore did, however, write only one poem, The Child in English. His most renowned and everlasting masterpiece, 'Gitanjali,' captured the literary world of London and earned him the Nobel Prize in 1913. This was followed by 'The Gardener' and 'The Crescent Moon'. 'Fruit Gathering,' 'Stray Birds,' 'The Fugitive,' 'Lover's Gift and Crossing,' 'Fireflies,' and 'Poems' are some of his other volumes. He has been referred to as India's national poet. His masterpiece, 'Gitanjali,' is a work of devotion and philosophy. He writes: -

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
 Where knowledge is free;
 Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
 Where words come out from the depth of truth;
 Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
 Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
 Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”.

Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924):- He was the first Indian poet to write poetry in English. He was the brother of Aurobindo Ghosh. His poems depict the sorrows of life and are autobiographical in nature. His famous poems were published under the title “Songs of Love and Death” and published in 1926. “Prime Vara” is a collection of poems published in the year 1890. An Indian critic feels that his poetry has no imaginary or sentiment that can be termed as Indian, He was Hellenist and Classicist Poet.

Some of his poems are “Poplar beech and weeping willow” is a romantic nature poem. The poem's title words, which represent the names of trees, are personified natural objects that are accused of being affected by human activity. He describes the passionate "love making of Juliyan and Irene" in his lyrical poetry "The Garden Passion." His other poem, Love Songs and Elegies, is a masterful use of language and imagery that celebrates nature. Among his other works are Perseus; The Gorgon Slayer; Nala and Damayanti; Orphic Mysteries; Immortal Eve; and Adam Alarmed in Paradise. In his poem ‘April’ he writes:

“Haste, April, upon city streets to blow.

Thy purest, warmest breezes, fly beneath.

The flower-girls’ poor beggary’s basket stow.

With lordliest gold of daffodils aglow,

I will not live thee, save with sighing breath”.

Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950):- Sri Aurobindo is regarded as the greatest poet-philosopher, poet-prophet, and poet-visionary in Indian English poetry. Songs to Myrtilla, Phaethon, O'Coil, The Lover's Complaint, Love in Sorrow, Madhusudan Dutt, and other early poems are renowned for their chaste language, vivid picture, and spontaneity of expression, but they lack mystic and spiritual appeal due to the influence of English decadent poets. The whole corpus of poetry composed between 1900 and 1910 is infused with a mystic and spiritual quality. One of Sri Aurobindo's main themes in his poems is love. In his early poems Songs to Mystilla, Night by the Sea, The Lover's Complaint, Love in Sorrow etc. love is a "passion, power and pulse." Urvashie and Love and Death, though sensuous and passionate, assume a spiritual significance. Savitri glorifies Love Eternal, Love that conquers Death

and Ignorance. C. R. Das hailed Sri Aurobindo as "The poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity", some of his poems: - 'Baji Prabhu Vidula' and 'The Mother to Her Son' are noticeable for expressing his ardent patriotism and love of freedom. There is a powerful undercurrent of nationalism in all his literary creations, both in prose and poetry. 'Chitrangada', 'The Tale of Nala' and 'The Vigil of Thailard' are some of his longer poems. Sri Aurobindo was a gifted and skilled poetic craftsman. He employed various poetic forms: -lyric, sonnet, epic and narrative form. He composed many sonnets following the Shakespearean pattern. His famous sonnets are: - To the Cuckoo, Rose I Have Loved, Transformation, Nirvan, The Kingdom Within, The Godhead, Cosmic Consciousness, The Unseen Infinite etc. Urvastie and Love and Death are his matchless narrative poems. Sri Aurobindo's poetic genius found its culmination in epic. His spiritual epic Savitri stands next to Milton's Paradise Lost as an epic.

He employed blank verse with vigour and beauty, delicate artistry, and sheer music. No other Indian English poet had shown flawless excellence in the use of blank verse before Sri Aurobindo. In Urvastie and Love and Death blank verse is musical and cadenced, sensuous, and picturesque. The blank verse of Savitri reminds us of the music and sweetness, suggestiveness, and flexibility of Miltonic blank verse. Sri Aurobindo's command over English is flawless and immaculate. His diction is suggestive, expressive, and picturesque, vivid, precise, and liquid. Symbols and images, though mystical, are remarkable for concreteness.

Sri Aurobindo, the lighthouse of the spirit, used the power of poetry for inspiring future generations. His epic, Savitri, says Premanand Kumar "has poised an incandescent image to lead us from the darkness of suicidal inertia into the light of positive achievement." His mystical and spiritual poetry greatly influenced English poetry, especially the Pondicherry school of poets.

He was an outstanding spiritual and intellectual writer. V.K. Gokak has compared him to "John Milton." He states in his poetry 'I have a hundred lives':-

"I shall approach thee in things and people dear,

and in thy spirit's motions half-possess

Loving what thou hast loved, shall fear thee near

Until I lay my hands on thee indeed

Somewhere among the stars, as 'twas decreed.”

Sarojini-Naidu (1879-1948):- Sarojini Naidu was a remarkable woman: a brilliant poet, a passionate feminist, and a tireless political activist. Naidu is known as ‘The Nightingale of India’ since she was the first Indian woman to serve as president of the Indian National Congress and as governor of an Indian state. Throughout her life, Naidu wrote various works, including children's poetry and others on topics like as tragedy, romance, and tragedy.

The main characteristic is a feeling of melody, music, and passion. The Golden Threshold was her debut collection of poetry, and it was followed by The Bird of Time and The Broken Wing. They were all emotionally and romantically sensitive. Muhammad Jinnah, The Sceptred Flute, The Feather of Dawn, Palanquin Bearers, Indian Dancers, In the Bazars of Hyderabad, and The Village Song are among her other works. V.K. Gokak has hailed her as the 'John Keats' of India. ‘Palanquin Bearer’ is one of the finest poems by her and in it she writes:

“Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,
 She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
 She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,
 She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.”

Other Renown Pre-Independence Poet

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902):- His poetry, which were infused with vedantic wisdom, spiritualism, and Indian mysticism, included the renowned pieces Sangeet-Kalpataru, Kali the Mother, Benediction, Light, Song of the Free, To the Awakened India, and others. He was an intelligent poet who was fluent in the English language.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894): He composed the national hymn of today, "Vande Mataram," which means "I worship my motherland, I bow to thee." The song was essential in the Indian independence campaign. Aurobindo wrote in his memory: - “The earlier Bankim was only a poet and stylist, the later Bankim was a seer and nation builder”.

Barindra kumar ghosh (1880-1959):- Fondly known as ‘Barin Ghose’, he was the youngest brother of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Manmohan Ghose, He was quite revolutionary and kind of extremist’s personality, but being in educated environment, he became revolutionary journalist and published famous Bengali weekly “Jugantar” (Transition of Epoch or New Era), which had enlightened many young revolutionaries during pre-Indian independence movement, mainly consist of rebellion poems and other aligned ideas.

Conclusion

New works arise when old works are well reviewed and thoroughly analyzed, Similarly Dutt and Ghosh family tree albums were led to immense development of poetry works which enlightened and enriched perception of post independent poets. In layman terms we can say from Derozio to Sarojini Naidu timeline their poetry works show unprecedented candid patriotic feelings towards nation, in reminiscence of their immersive Poetry works Government of India celebrates every year, for instance, ‘National Women’s Day’ on February 13th on Sarojini Naidu’s birthday, despite ‘International Women’s Day’ on March 8th.

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