The Rise of Indian English and the Renaissance in Modern Indian Literature

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Abstract—This article is about The Rise of Indian English and The Renaissance in Modern Indian Literature. This also brings in to light how the Indian Novel in English came into existence during the British rule in India. The History of English literature in our country forth when English people entered into Hindustan in the name of trading. In order to overcome the problem of communication in an alien land the Englishmen pleaded for the adoption of their Language. In the long uneasy and interminable task of making English as an Indian language, Mahandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were the central figures.

(Key words: Adoption, Alien land, Interminable, Central Figures, Pleading, Existence)

I. THE RISE OF INDIAN ENGLISH

Indian Writing in English came into existence during the period of East India Company in India, but the true flowering began to take place after the independence. English is treated today as either as an official or a second language due to its popularity amongst the India’s population. This is precisely because India had been a colony of the British Empire for close to 300 years. The entry of Englishmen happened in the year 1608 because of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, when he received the British Naval Expedition Hector Captain William Hawkins to his court. It was India’s first assignation with an English man and their language.

Later, the Emperor permit the British to open a stable port and an industry on a special quest from his friend King James IV, later it was conveyed by his ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe. Thus English started spreading its wings and their stay had become an eternal one.

In order to overcome the problem of communication in an unknown land, one of the directors of East India Company, Charles Grant, requested in 1792 for the adoption of the English language. This was a solid step to seek foothold. By the beginning of 17th century, the Englishmen started ruling India vigorously. In 1813, the Englishmen besides public functions, started educating and influencing people through writings in English.

Along with the books, the printing presses also brought in to existence. It gave a new rise to the first ever newspaper – Hicky’s Bengal Gazette (1780) and the others followed in due course. And then, they started the introduction of private schools which imparted only English Education. Slowly people became slave to the new life and language, so the interest towards Western education spread faster than expected. The love for English rapidly increased between 1835 - 1855. It was reported that during this period 32,000 English books were sold against 13,000 Indian language books.

Forty three years later, the new language was accepted with a small declaration by the Governor in Council for the promotion of European literature and science amongst Indians. The annual report of the Registrar of newspapers for India for the year 1957, informed that nearly more than 50 English newspapers were existed in India while as many as the same in all other Indian languages put together. The circulation of English papers was 1,005,000, while that of 57 Hindi newspapers had an aggregate circulation of only 394,000.

English newspapers, as a rule, were not only better edited but were also read all over the country, whereas the Hindi reading public was confined to parts of North India. Again, it is an interesting fact that there were seven times more quarterly journals in English as compared to Hindi and as many in English as in almost all the other languages put together. The love towards the European language increased day by day. The alien language suddenly got a special pace and spreads its wings even in the government offices. All educated people across the country started using the language in order to gain a new magnetism from the public. The language apprehended the significant place in almost all the Educational Institutions. The reasons to impose the new language is not to constrain the condition of Hindustan but to gain the trust of Indians. It was also one of the deceitful action of colonizers.

M. E. Derrett states and believes that the British's aim was not to educate and improve the standards of Indians. They needed a good translators to carry their official work for that they should make the Indians to familiarize with some Western ideas and manners. So they tried and succeeded in their own way. Apart from translators, they were in need of persons to carry their clerical works so they asserted the western education and made the people to believe that the new education system was a better one than that of their own.

The demand for the innovative language steadily developed amongst Indians. People slowly started succeeding the western manners and customs. The first railway and first telegraph line were established in this period only. People welcomed these new developments and started enjoying their modern facilities. With reading, comprehending and speaking, people started writing in English too. In the beginning people were using folks and myths for their writing because India has been the land of tales for so many years. The above facts made the Indian
writing in English a renowned one. They utilized prose and
determined verse even epics for their writings. Everywhere
the new creative urge for learning was visible. This period
was known as the revolutionary period of Indians, and it is
referred as the period of literary renaissance.

Indian English refers to the body of work by the
Hindustani, whose mother tongue could be one among Indian
languages. It has just one and half century old and compared
to other languages it has only recent history. The first book in
english was by Sake Dean Mohammed who wrote about the
travels of his own and he named it as “Travels of Dean
Mohamed”. In 1793, it was published in England because it
followed the Western writing in many places. In the
beginning, Indian writing in English was difficult because
writers failed to alter words to certain extent. They struggled
to use a new-fangled vocabulary which was a great
expectation of the British people.

At the early of 20th century, when the English men
conquered India thoroughly, a new class of writers were
emerged. Those new writers were British people, who were
born and brought up in India. They wrote on the themes and
manners of India in their own style. But they didn’t received
much appreciation because the writers couldn’t make
Indianness in their story telling. Rudyard Kipling, Jim
Corbett and George Orwell and others were representing
these new breed of British writers. In fact some of their
writings are still considered to be the masterpieces of English
literature.

The number of fictional writers was more in the year 1947.
They were classified into two groups. Primarily the English
writers who wrote for their own people, and their writings
aimed to entertain and educate the Englishmen. Many
English writers were inspired by Indian themes, culture and
history. In fact many colonizers tried to internalize the
culture of India in their writings. But they failed in their
ttempts because they could never be authentic though they
wanted to present everything through their experience. Some
of the texts written by the colonizers became very popular in
the world wide —such as ‘The Jungle Book’ written by
Rudyard Kipling, or Paul Scott's 'Tetralogy, The Jewel in the
Crown', both popular as novels, as well as film adoptions.

II. THE RENAISSANCE IN MODERN INDIAN
LITERATURE & RESULTS

The Renaissance in Modern Indian literature initiated with
Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was born in Radhanagar village in
West Bengal, Hooghly district, on May 22, 1772. In 1803, he
secured a job with the East India Company. To fulfill his goal
he shifted his place to Calcutta. But he wasn’t happy with the
education system and the method of teaching so along with
his friends, he formed an association of English with Hindu
Scholars. He started introducing subjects like Science,
Mathematics, Political Science and English in his own
school.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy felt that the new subjects introduced
by him would give a better place and understanding for his
own people. People began to display increasing confidence in
handling the English tongue, and subsequently, English
became the medium of self-expression in the lives of the
intellectuals. Later Raja Ram started social reform
programmes and spreads the culture value of India in British
publications.

In the beginning, the Indians reacted with suspicion that
the new language may create a cultural fabric in their own
country but gradually they realised the situation and
welcomed with open minds. The 1930s generally seemed as
the take-off decade for the Indian novels in English, people
can trace its genealogy quite far back in the previous century.
In the 17th century the printing press was introduced but the
publication were largely of printing the Bible or the
government decrees. The real freedom of English education
came into being because of Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was
named as the first Indian Masters of the English Prose. Not
only in fiction he was great in many other fields too.

In the nineteenth century, the position of English
underwent a tremendous change, even the language of
administration and law remind in English. The medium of
teaching and examination in most colleges and universities
were also in English. Between 1835 and 1855, the number of
those educated in English had been rapidly increased and the
number of Englishmen in India too.

People’s love for English books increased and they started
following them in customs, dress, eating habits, in salutations
and it is said that the popular Indian city, Lucknow in 1824
had the look of a European city because of the people’s
western manners. The interest towards the new western style
made parents to send their children to new missionary
schools. It is said that Rabindranath Tagore’s father,
Maharshi Debendranath, went from house to house, morning
till evening, entreating Hindu Parents not to send their
children to missionary schools but only to native schools.

It is no secret that the English language faced criticisms
from the beginning. According to R. Chandra Sekaran (12),
English is the veritable Suez Canal for intellectual
intercourse between the West and the East, between England
and India especially. From Vedic to modern times the
eminent Indian thinkers, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub
Chunder Sen, Swamy Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo,
Gandhi, and Dr. S. Radha Krishan - all of them made
themselves heard in the West through their mastery over
English language.

Western education had become the gateway to knowledge,
freedom and power. It cut the old bonds of convention and
tradition and it made a new world and new life possible.
English became the medium of self-expression in the lives of
the intellectuals. The restoration of Indian Classical learning
and the study of European arts and science gave rise to an
extraordinary arousing in India. More and more books were
published by Indo-Anglican authors who focused on fellow
Indians as well as on foreign audience:

By the late nineteenth century the Indian reading public
had already divided and authors were writing as much to
arouse Indians as to impress and interest the westerners. For
the first time they were able to communicate with an
educated élite in their own country—one might venture to
call them a sub-caste—besides interesting some people
outside India (Derrett 18).
The rise of English novel in India

III. THE RISE OF ENGLISH NOVEL IN INDIA

The journey of English novel had begun with a bash when Rabindranath Tagore was bestowed with the Nobel Prize for literature. By the time V.S. Naipaul was also awarded with the Nobel Prize. Thus Indian English has captured a far flung reach. The very eternal trend was held strongly, soon after by the publication of Rabindranath Tagore's spiritual prose "The Gitanjali" and by the Preachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

But, unfortunately, poetry and drama for which India is known better to the world from time immemorial, are not getting due attention when compared to fiction. The Indian novel in English in its brief history has always been concerned with defining a national identity. The three pioneering novelists, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mulk Raj Anand, and R. K. Narayan have lost none of their authenticity and appeal in the 90s, although their distinctive earlier works appeared in the 30s.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was known as the Master of Modern India. Roy’s works are deeply rooted in Brahmanism and Hinduism. His semi-autobiographical novel, The Serpent and the Rope (1960), is a story of a search for spiritual truth in Europe and in India. Roy’s India is not a certain geographical or historiographical entity, but more of a philosophical concept and a symbol of spiritual calling.

R.K. Narayan though he writes in English, his thoughts, feelings, the stirrings of the soul and consciousness are all of the soil of India. Through his writings, he gave unaccustomed people a broad window to peep into Indian culture and sensibilities. He is one of the few writers in India who took their craft seriously and are dependably striving to improve the standards of the life of the suffering Indians. He is a master of comedy and a critic of life and literature as well.

Mulk Raj Anand as a writer of fiction has his notable marks of vitality and a keen sense of actuality. He is admired for his novels and short stories which have acquired the status of being classic works of modern Indian English Literature. These three writers, in their own special ways, became significant for the later growth and development of Indian novel writing.

REFERENCES