



TOWARDS INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract:

English, an Indian language is surprising tool of Modernity out of its remoteness of origin and absence of natural need for its acceptance by Indian masses. The European Renaissance saw the British rulers dominating India. The need for manpower was the base of their education policy. But English language has been a vehicle for western ideas of Modernity for the Indians. It started the period of Indian Renaissance to understand the world. English language cultivated scientific approach, aversion to metaphysics and imbibed liberalism, rationality and modification in religious concepts. The catalysts like Congress, Newspapers and Courts of Law made the language useful and necessary. It became the language of expression, starting a new cult of Literature in India. After various changes in the title, it is finalized as Literature in English with certain phases of its development. Interestingly it has its own variety in itself which is called 'Indian English'.

In the 21st century, it can be observed that there are number of people in India who communicate in English language than the populace of England where the language had been originated. The days in Indian History are quite near to the present when English language was used as a means of impression and authority and the speakers of this language used to get social status and hierarchy. The importance of Indian speakers in English lies in their command over the language of remote area without any natural need for its learning. The present paper is an attempt to see how English was introduced to the Indians and how do they develop it to the extent that to frame a variety i.e. Indian English.

The flow of Renaissance made the Europeans to find out new ways for commerce with Oriental Countries. Navigators started at various directions to

find out new lands. Vasco da Gama reached at the coast of Kerala in 1498. It was the first interaction of the Western people with the Orientals after the dark ages. Father Stephen came to India particularly at Goa in 1579. Afterwards the British people came to India in 1600 under the banner of 'East India Company'. At first their interest was limited only with their commerce and colonies. But when they found little opportunities in politics, they came forward to acquire its gains. Within 150 years they were able to frame their military which they used with force at Plessey in 1757. In 1772, they got the right of revenue administration and in 1790 acquired the administration of criminal justice in Bengal. These were the political footprints of British people in India. But in kaleidoscope of literature, it has been found that Englishmen started to accept Indian environment in their language. Their travelogues, journals & letters covered the Indian milieu. Englishmen started to compose poetry on Indian subjects in the 18th century. Sir William Jones has composed a '*Hymns to Hindu Deities*'

In the early 19th century, it was the basic need of the British rulers in India, to engage native Indians as their third class administrators i.e. clerks etc. When they thought to educate Indians, Thomas Babington Macaulay fixed their attitude in his minutes in 1835. It says:

The problem in India is that we have to educate people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother tongue. We must teach them some foreign Language.... Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature or at the particular situation....We shall see the strongest reason to think that of all foreign tongues, the British tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

Lord Bentinck resolved to introduce European science to 'Indian subject' to fulfill their need of third class administrative staff. In this way English language was introduced to the Indians officially and they started to absorb it slowly from generation to generation.

In the 19th century the educated people from India started to express themselves in English. At the earlier stage they expressed in the prose form and some in poetry in English. The prose in English dealt with historical

development which describes the contemporary life in India whereas the poetry in English had used with literary purpose particularly by the elite class Indians from Bengal, Madras and Bombay presidency. Their subject matters were urban life of elite class. The most important use of English in India was that it was used to translate the materials in the various Indian languages. English language was used for dealing business communication, law and administration.

At first, English was used for business letters, drafting memoranda, petitions and documents used in courts of law. For example Raja Ram Mohan Roy used English for the abolition of *Sati* system. It was also used by the Nationalists for their speeches and arguments in public places as well as courts of law. And it helped to propagate the idea of nationalism among the Indian people.

With the introduction of English language in India, there was Renaissance in every walk of life and it has been reflected in literature. It influenced the people in such way to establish the foundation of modern India. The various western ideas were introduced to the Indian people through English language. The knowledge of the language acquainted Indian people with the current affairs at global level. They came to know about the political thoughts of the great thinkers like Voltaire and Rousseau. The examples of American Revolution and French Revolution made to think them about their nation as a whole. The trinity of French Revolution i.e. fraternity, equality and brotherhood awakened the feeling of nationalism among them. India, a nation of various regional dialects was a complicated one to percolate the feeling of nationalism in it. But the spread of English Language unified it. Every orator of English language was comprehended in all over India. So that it was possible for political leaders such like Surendranath Banerjee, Ranade, Gokhale, Nehrus and M. K. Gandhi to present themselves all over the nation.

Not only the political thoughts and ideas lured them but the scientific approach towards life started to build the background for rationality for the Indian masses. The Indians came to the conclusion to think about physics and averted from metaphysics. The metaphysical ecstasy and hatred for material world faded. The physical comfort became the part of their life. They become

more material to gather wealth than to acquire merits for their generations. The age old concepts of culture were sacked down. The western culture of industrial revolution becomes the part of their life. The notions of untouchability and bans on communal food eating habits were started to vanish. The public life started to become more liberal and rational.

The Economic exploitation was also brought to the notice of Indian masses by the leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji^[1] and they gathered the ground to fight for their nation. They up aside the age old concept of surrendering themselves to the Kings and glorify them mysteriously; rather the masses become aware of their pathetic states and awakened for their rights i.e. the seeding of democracy.

The English language was channelized through the Missionaries in its early phase. The Missionaries contested the rational grounds of Hindu religion and its utility for the marginalized people as against Christian religion through English Language. Because of the confrontation of the language the people like Dayanand Saraswati, Keshavchandra Sen, Raja Ram Mohan Roy started rethinking about Hindu religion and came forward with The Arya Samaj, The Brahmo Samaj etc. Out of this sterilization the Indian society marched towards a religious mobilization and rethinking of the principles of egalitarianism and humanism in religion which had gone away in the medieval period.

In short, the introduction of English language in India has affected social, religious, political and economic sphere and adhered the basic principles like nationalism, equality, and democracy along with material interest on the part of Indian masses.

There is certain course for the inculcation of English language in India which depicts the development of English language in India.

1. Indian National Congress(1885):

Indian National Congress has been established in 1885. As it has its offices throughout India, all the meeting and conferences have been held in English from the very beginning. In the pre-independence period the presidents used to be good speakers of English. The eloquence of these speakers could be compared with the speakers' from British Parliament.

They had good vocabulary and rhythms. Through their speeches English started to develop in India with burning convention, flaming spirit, inspiration, emotions and zeal.

2. Journalism:

The Newspapers like *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, *Swadesa Mitran*, *The Indian Patriots*, *The Hindustan Times* and *The Hindu*^[2] etc. were the example of use of English in a lucid way. The journalists like Surendranth Banarjee, Sir Aurobindo, Ranade, Kelkar, K. R. Iyengar, T. Prakashan, C.Y. Chitamani, M. K. Gandhi etc. used English for arguments and reasoning in the newspapers which depicts its development among the Indians.

3. Pleading in the Courts of Law:

From the British rule in India the language of administration was English. The Court documents and constitution were in English so all the pleadings were in English. Tej Bahadur Sapru, M. R. Jayakar, Srinivas Iyengar, Bhulabhai Desai, M. A. Jinnah, V. K. Krishna Menon were the expert scholars to use English in the above said matters.

4. Speeches:

The urge for freedom movement in India gave rise to the great national leaders. Leaders like Gokhale and Tilak were renowned political leaders in all over India. To reach directly to each and every Indian, they used English language as a medium of their thoughts and expressions. For the root level comprehension the thoughts were expressed in English language by the leaders like Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar, who gave emphasis on the utility, clarity and directness of it. So the functional, simple and clear language was comprehended by the masses.

5. Creative Writing:

The early phase of 20th century India born the generation who found oneness with English language to the extent, that this generation started to use it for their literary expression with confidence. Novelists and short story writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan wrote in English i.e. Indian English which indicated 'Indianness' in the sentence

pattern, dialogues, feelings, reactions and themes. In short, Indian ethos can be noticed in Indian English Writings in the contemporary period. Their writing emerged with the concept of Indian English Literature. Let's see the concept in elaborate way.

The literature in English covers all that literature of different nations whose writers have expressed themselves in English. The Indian writers have expressed themselves in English language which is named as Indian English Literature. At first it was recognized as Anglo-Indian Literature. It covered the literature of those English writers who wrote on Indian subjects, including the writers who are born as Eurasians. If some native Indian has gone to England, his literature is also considered as Anglo-Indian literature. But after 1947, English has been counted as one of the Indian languages. After the Independence, the literature by Indians in English is considered as Indio-Anglican Literature. Now as per the amendment of Sahitya Academy, it is called as Indian Literature in English. The first generation of poets and writers in English from India played the role of bridge between West and Indian culture. Sir Aurobindo, Ravindranth Tagore, Puran Singh and Sri Anand Acharya were the representatives of this generation. But the next generation of the Indian English literary figures comes with more compact of 'Indianness' in their literary works. Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramamnujan, Parthasarathy, Pritish Nandy, A. K. Mehrotra, Arun Kolhatkar, Jayant Mahapatra, Dilip Chitre, Saleem Peeradine and Agha Sahid Ali cover the present scenario of Indian English Literature. Indian Literature in English can be classified in to certain phases as per its development in India.

a) Colonialism (1825-1900):

It is the introductory period of English literature in India. Only the upper class people from India were just introduced to the new language. There were some British writers who tended to write on Indian subjects i.e. Derozio etc. Kashiprasad Ghosh, Dutt, Manmohan Ghosh were some of the Indian writers in the latter half of the 19th century. At this period the language used for literature reflects the mood of compromise and resistance.

b) Nationalism (1900-1950):

With the establishment of Indian National congress, the feeling of nationalism was started to become more firm and reached to root level. It was the period in the history of India, when people have achieved freedom from British people with resistance. English language boosted their confidence. Puran Singh, Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu and Tagore were the prominent writers of this phase who had no other subject than freedom and nationalism. In short, it was the golden age of Indian literature in English because it was full of optimistic approach.

c) Modernism (1950-1980):

The tempo of nationalism was changed into selfishness when the political leaders started to use the power for their sake. These entire things are reflected in contemporary Indian English literature. Backwardness, corruption, hypocrisy have been reflected in it. Nissim Ezekiel ^[3] was prominent writer of this period who was known for rejection of past, alienation and opposition to idealism. Every day language, personal relationship, dehumanizing environments, western imitation and destruction of Indian cultural traditions have become some of the features of Indian English Literature.

d) Post Modernism (1980-....):

Indian English Literature shares the concept of post modernism along with the remaining world from 1980 onwards. It also shares the aspects of post modernism i.e. parody, intertextuality, literary cannibalism etc. Jayanta Mahapatra, Alexander, Aga Sahi Ali, Peeradina Manohar Shetty, Vikram Shet and Imtiz Dharkar etc. are the renowned literary figures in the contemporary Indian English Literature.

In this way it can be observed that how India is acquainted with English and how the Indians have imbibed the language to suit their feelings and expressions. The Booker Prize Winning Novels are the examples of the fact. The acquisition of English language by the Indians has cultivated a new variety of English language i.e. 'Indian English' and day-by-day it is growing with its own speed.

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