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## INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES

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**Abstract:** Indo-Anglian literature or Indian English Literature as it has now come to be known, has since come a long way from being viewed patronizingly by the British rulers of colonies in India as the anglicization of the native scholar to making occasional forays into the English literary scene, to being acknowledged as a legitimate, serious and popular genre of modern English literature. What began as exotic writings on British colonial India by English authors, blossomed in the course of time into a full fledged literature produced by native and expatriate Indians. Indian writers have contributed a peculiar quality, a distinctive touch which those who have not breathed the air of this land and lived in the midst of its people, can hardly aspire to appreciate. It is no exaggeration to claim that Indian English Literature has enriched world literature with the writings of celebrated personalities like Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Henry Derozia, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Sri Aurobindo, Manmohan Ghose, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Jayanta Mahapatra, Amrita Pritam, Anita Desai, Harindranath Chattopadaya, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, Arun Joshi, Sashi Tharoor, Arundathi Roy, Vikram Seth and Jhumpa Lahari to mention only a few. If the native Indian writer deliberates over issues that catalyse his society then the expatriate Indian writes about cross cultural issues, his personal conflict to come to terms with his 'Indianness' the quest for his roots and sometimes the release of homecoming. Thus Indian English Literature is conspicuous in relation to English and American literature as it is 'eclectic' and thematically 'Universally'. The early exponents of Indian English Literature were social and spiritual reformers. Some of them were artistically and aesthetically inclined. The early moderns were revolutionaries, whereas the present Indian writers in English have become liberal cosmopolitans in outlook trying their hand at a wide range and variety of themes. Indian English Literature is thus poised for new triumph in new ventures in form and idea, emerging as a rich tapestry of Indian as well as world cultures.

Indian English literature – pre-independence era: English writings by Indians attracted public attention during the first quarter of the 19th century. However, it finds its roots in the Renaissance among the Bengali elite during the last quarter of the 18th century. This awakening began with the introduction of English education by the British in India. Private schools imparting English education were established in Cuddalore (1717), Bombay (1718) and Calcutta (1720). India's first newspaper "Hicky's Bengal Gazette" began publishing in 1780. The Calcutta Madrasa was established by Warren Hastings in 1871. Sir William Jones, an eminent and enlightened Englishman, organised the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, where the Indian classics were studied and discussed in depth by eminent Englishmen John Wilson, Sir Edwin Arnold, and Sir William Hunter, to mention only a few, whose writings about India generated great interest in England. Enchanted by Indian classics and the Sanskrit language, Sir Jones published English translations of Hindu classics like 'Sakuntala' and 'Hitopadesa'. He also wrote several odes to Hindu deities and a verse tale based on a Mahabharata story entitled "Enchanted Fruit". Another, Englishman Jonathan Duncan founded the Sanskrit College at Benaras. Two Englishmen David Hare and Sir Edward Hyde collaborated with Raja Rammohan Roy, the dynamic Father of Modern India" to establish the Hindu College in 1817 at Calcutta, which was the first Anglo- Bengali

institution. He was the forerunner of a tremendous literary and religious awakening and reform in the country. The pioneers in Indian English Literature belong to this period which was 'subdued' and unobtrusive'. Such was the moment the phoenix hour that bred Indi-Anglian Literature; sometimes with self-consciousness but sometimes as naturally-unself-consciously-as leaves grow up on a tree. Indian Themes: The category branded as Indian Literature virtually encompasses the whole of India and its very single aspect, both symbolically as well as realistically. And this certainly is not an overstatement or hyperbole, as writers beginning from the prehistoric age have tried to mirror their society, their times at large, a work to which they have also been successful. Indeed, the thought themes in Indian literature broadly hold within itself a magnificent yet clandestine vision, if viewed in an open angle. To state more precisely, it is generally seen that writers are of the habit to leave their piece of work with an open ending, i.e. , leaving his/her readers to judge the conclusion according to their own wish and understanding. And this where lies that much hidden 'success' of the writer, who is forever bound under societal norms when he/she is writing for the present generation. Before beginning with a novel, poetry, short story or play, a writer always has to bear in mind the previous happening in his community and consequences that might occur after the work is published. Hence, the writer never

as such can move out from his society and publish an out-of-this-world creation; if such phenomenon ever comes into being, the writer, most likely is to be branded a 'social outcaste' or made 'incommunicado'. Thus, themes in Indian literature always have to be created keeping in mind the ongoing Indian society or the people associated with it. Now, when elaborated further on subject, Indian literature and its predominant themes, it can be found that a writer, be it of any capability cannot move out from the long-established themes of humanity, like romance, society, tragedy, comedy, adventure, war, or the ancient ones like mythological or epical. Epic Themes: Epic themes in Indian literature began its journey with the two legendary magnum creations Ramayana and Mahabharatha, influences and citations of which are still employed by contemporary Indian writers. Romantic Themes: Romantic themes in Indian literature was soon to follow the ancient Hindu society, jumping from staunch Hinduism and its priests and borrowing to some extent from west, precisely from its counterpart. Romance necessarily entailed virtually every aspect of life dealing with war, battles, crusades, chivalry, gallantry, relationships with heroic adventure and its knights wooing the princess etc and not only a love affair between a male and a female. Writers were successful to represent every kind of backdrop and link it with romanticism, which just as usual, is espoused by modern Indian regional or English writings. Indeed contemporary Indian literature has derived out a sophisticated version of romantic theme in Indian literature, dealing again with convoluted versions of social backgrounds and yet falling in place with a perfect balance. Literature of Partition: Although the proposal for Pakistan was placed before the country in the 1930s and pressure for the bifurcation of India mounted up in the 1940s, the very reality of the division of the country in 1847 came as a rude shock. It kept the Indian writers completely bewildered. The partition of the country was a political action overriding pious thoughts and prayers of the common man. A new corpus of literature grew out of the immediate experience of the partition in several Indian languages but mostly in the languages and in the language-areas directly affected by it. Thematically, these writings are culmination of the communal discourse in the colonial period but so conspicuous are they by the immediacy of the response to the massacre and suffering and degradation of all human values that they deserve special attention and need treating as a separate category. The two major aspects of the partition of the country that concerned the people are the brutalities perpetrated by both religious communities against each other and the agony and suffering of

leaving one's home and familiar surroundings forever. People blamed the British for its policy of divide and rule; they blamed the national leaders for their lust of power and they also condemned their own fate. Among the works well-known is Khushwant Singh's novel Train to Pakistan(1956); Ag de Khed- The Play of Fire(1949) written in Punjabi by the reputed novelist Nanak Singh and Khun de Sohile-Peans of Blood, 1948 are the twin novels dealings with the people caught in the net of communal politics; GobindMalhi portrays the life in a refugee camp in his Sindhi novel Ansu(1952); VinodRastogi's Hindi play AzadikeBadfocuses on the problem of the refugees and the extent of exploitation that they were subjected to. Rural-Urban Transition: The variety of nature and social traditions and rituals was partly minimized by the writers' growing interest in urban themes which provided them alternative locations and institutions-offices, courts, railway platforms, post offices, colleges...-that then towards homogeneity. The process of urbanization initiated by the colonial rule was accompanied by the technological intervention in the rural space. Indian literature presented both the rural and urban India quite often as constricting and hostile areas of habitation. Most of the major works of Indian fiction, with one or two exceptions, have rural location. But in most of them again, the city penetrates and in some cases is woven with the great artistry vindicating the urban-rural reality of modern India. In some other literatures particularly those closely related with the British made port-towns, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, however, the effects of urbanization of social institutions are quite strong. The city has many faces: it promises new hopes for man, knowledge and wealth, and freedom. It also appears as an aggressor and a corrupter. There are three important aspects that Indian writers have tried to create when they talked about the rural-urban opposition of the growing urbanization as well as the breaking up the rural society particularly its structure : Firstly, a threat to Indian culture and they looked back towards it with nostalgia; secondly, they consider the rural society as the centre of Indian life, the most authentic representatives of Indian life in contrast to the urban centres which stand for individualism and alienation; thirdly, they associated with this theme the perception of time giving the narratives a quality of vastness. We can find out these features through many works such as Premchand's Godan; by Thakazhi; GopinathMohanty'sParaja; Thalayodu-Skull by Thakazhi, 1947; Hypocrites by Anna Ram "Sudama", Rajasthani, SahityaAkademi Award in 1978; ...

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enjoyed by them at the expense of the people located within a hierarchical structure fixed forever, became embarrassing as well as challenging. It was embarrassing because the writers found it extremely difficult to reconcile their pride for Hindu social organizations with the ideas of equality. It was also challenging because it prompted the writers to take a definite ideological position. Whatever be the objectives of a few social reformers, the majority in the literary community did not adopt any radical posture. Even their reformatory zeal was motivated by a general humanitarianism rather than by any concrete ideas bringing a real change in the caste hierarchy. Scholars defending the system always argued that the caste system in its original form was not hereditary but based on psychological foundations; division of the society according to different occupational groups was in fact an exercise towards the recognition of the innate psychological inclinations of men. Some of them agreed that the complete stratification of the society, denying the lower groups any opportunity towards vertical mobility, was unjust and inhuman. And some condemned it severely. But all writings on caste-inequality failed to create any significant impact until the movement against the system emerged from the oppressed themselves. The inequality generated by the caste system is a recurring theme in Indian literature to which almost all major writers have responded seriously. We can't think any writers defending the system though a very few could actually visualize the free-caste society. The movement started by Jotiba who came from a "low" caste. The criticism of the caste by Dayananda, a Gujarati Brahmin or Vivekananda, a Bengali Kayastha, inspired many writers to create a public opinion which became more and more widespread with the passage of time. Writers played a significant role in combating the prejudices and the tradition-bound perceptions. With a lot of writers such as UnnavaLakshminarayana (Malapalli- The Village of the Untouchable), SivaramKaranth (ComanaDudi-The Drum of Chomai); TarashankarBandyopadhyay (Kabi-The Poet); Thakazhi (Tottiyutemakan-Scavenger's Son); Mulk Raj Anand (Untouchable), Premchand (SevasadanandKarmabhumi); Indian literature discovered a new potentiality in the life of the low and the lowest, the deprived and the humiliated. The hero-centric world finally vanished, yielding the place to the anti-hero. In all of these variety of literary genres, it can be witnessed that authorship is mysteriously and productively in line with societal norms, permanently portraying one or the other type of societal variation that has changed with age. Themes in Indian literature during Vedic Age, themes in Indian literature during Classical Age,

themes in Indian literature during Medieval Age differs grossly with themes in Indian literature for the contemporary age. As such, social themes in Indian literature, be it in any kind of literal category, wholly falls in place with the structure organisation that humanity dwells in. Style of Indian English Literature: 'Stylistic influence' from the local languages appears to be an exceptional feature of much of the Indian English literature – the local language construction and system is very much reflected in the illustrations, as is mirrored in the literal translation of local idioms. Yet one more breath-taking and praiseworthy feature of these English Indian writers is that they have not only 'nativised' the 'British' mother tongue in terms of stylistic features, but, they have also acculturated English in terms of the 'Indianised context'. A broad view that the mother tongue is the primary means of literary creativity is still generally held across culturally diversity. Creativeness in another tongue is often measured as deviation from this strict norm. The native language is considered 'pure', it is addressed as a standard model of comparison. This however have caused difficulties for non-native writers of Indian English literature and it is more than infrequently that they have to guard themselves writing again, in English. The Voices of Women's Protest The challenging and protesting woman appeared in Indian literature by the second decade of the 20th century. The presentation of the woman continued to be one of the major concerns of the Indian literature in the 20th century as it was in the 19th century. The foregrounding of the woman began in the last century in the wake of various reform movements launched by the champions of the woman's emancipation. The problematization of the woman's role in the family and occasionally outside the domestic confined-such situations were more contrived than real and were generally part of historical novels and plays-was so intimately connected with the changes in the society, or at least in the social attitude, that the literature of this period, so far as the women's portrayals is concerned is as much a manifesto of social change as it is the record of these movements. This century witnessed the growth of a large number of women writers in almost all the languages and despite some resistance from a small section, women writers enjoyed patronage and critical attention. All women writers, however, did not propose any radical change in the social structure or in the man-woman relationship. Some of them are so programmed by the existing patriarchal ideologies that their attitude towards women questions at its best was gentle and compassionate, and at its worst submissive and conservative. The Bengali women writers such as

Annurupa Devi, Nirupama Devi, Giribala Devi; Prabhavati Devi Sarasvati...different in their styles and narrative power, sympathy and vision, hardly shared the critical temper of many of the “feminists” writers like Tagore, Sarat Chandra. But resistance to the existing tendencies of glorification of exclusive “feminine” occupations and assertion of women’s professional ambition and emotional fulfillment appeared in the writings of Sailabala Shankar, better known as Triveni, in Kannada; K. SarasvatiAmmu in Malayalam; and VinhavariShirurka and Geeta Sane (Aviskar-1939 and Bharatiya-1985) both in Marathi.

Another powerful writer is IsmatChughtai - the first Indian woman writer to rebel against the feudal values and taboos jealously preserved by Muslim society. In the last few decades, a lot of women writers have gained great achievements in Indian literature such as C. Soboti (Listen, Girl !-2004), Arundhati Roy, Indira Laxmi, or men writers also project a futuristic vision of the New Woman in the Indian context. Here are works asserting humanistic values over and above the taboos and superstitions of yester-years like those in MarathandaVarma, Malayalam by C.V. Raman Pillai.

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