



SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA THROUGH ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The common forum to unite the whole world under a single language is majorly accelerated by English. Different countries with their diversities in culture, social structure, and literature gave expression to their ideas with a commonly recognized language –English. Indian writing in English has also established its identity worldwide with this globally accepted language itself. The main objective of this article is to analyse the role played by Indian writers and literature in bringing transformation in society. The bold step taken by women writers to express their views questioning patriarchy is discussed. Contemporary challenges faced by Indian society are briefly highlighted.

Keywords: literature, transformation, society, diversities, Contemporary challenges

INTRODUCTION

The human being is a social being. Society is a setup of a combination of diversified people with their own ideas. Literature is used as a tool by social critique as means of calling for social change and justice to bring in social transformation owing to its power to connect the world by shaping the civilization, correcting political disparities, emphasizing the cultural heritage of the society. It gives insights into their own past or present cultures and can help them a stronger connection to others in their own cultures. Literature reflects the nature and spirit of a particular time as a mirror and rectifies innumerable follies prevailing in the society. Sense of individuality, future orientation, creative possibility, and identity could be awakened and inculcated through literature by expanding the horizons of its readers.

INDIAN SOCIETY AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Indian society is not only a conglomeration of various ethnic, religious, linguistic, caste and regional collectiveness but a complex and rigid arrangement in different dimensions. These diversities needed a common forum to express themselves within the nation and in a globalized way due to colonial and post-colonial impacts. To reach innumerable scholarly thinkers the English language played a dominant role especially during the colonial period to express their agitation against the British. Each successful attempt witnessed a drastic increase in response to unite for a cause in this multi-lingual country. This, in turn, encouraged and increased the number of positive thinkers to venture into an ‘alien’ language. But spontaneous usage of language and literature made Indian writers create their own identity as ‘Indian writing in English’ because of its unique expression feature. Meanwhile, this creative ‘self-expression’ through English also has been termed as Indo-Anglian literature. However, promoting the English language to join the world community gained positivity against the promotion of vernaculars which would have been a threat to India’s unity. Rabindranath Tagore very aptly quotes, “A language is not like an umbrella or an overcoat than can be borrowed by unconscious or deliberate mistake; it is like the living skin itself.” Since European countries are characterized by one dominant language, the problem of unity and cohesion is therefore different in Europe than in India. Due to such multi-lingual civilization and in absence of all- India language as a unifying force, the formation of linguistic states narrowed down the development, giving rise to castes, provincialism endangering national unity.

ROLE OF INDIAN LITERATURE IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Indian society witnessed its transformation through various literary contributions in the form of poetry, novels, dramas, etc. Novelists attempted to assimilate the newly confronting situations and complex dilemmas of the modern world in a more prolific way. There was no dearth of talent among writers to present their writing in a simple and appealing way. In a country like the size of India, social life is so full of vaginas and varieties that novelists



will find the material spread before it with a watchful eye and a demanding heart as inexperienced. A few unforgotten novelists are quoted here like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, etc., Mulk Raj Anand could participate more proficiently in freedom struggle through his powerful weapon –writing. His first five novels *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939) and *Across the Black Waters* (1940) wrote in a brisk unselfconscious way about what he had seen. He narrated the air filled with the dust of politics and infected with the fumes of man's inhumanity to man, but with scope for hope. Posturizing the unprivileged, attacking the existing bureaucracy of British rule, he came to be identified in the literature and targeted hurdles of society to achieve big change and freedom for India.

He projected the theme with the flesh and blood of everyday existence to make them realize their daily striving. R. K. Narayan, a man of letters and simplicity was one of the few writers of India who took their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing a sense of dedication that may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection. 'Swami and Friends' (1935), *Bachelor of Arts* (1936), 'The Dark Room' (1938) and 'The English Teacher' (1945), etc., are some of his outstanding efforts to reflect a mirror image of Indian society. For him, no place could be as quiet and familiar as his imaginary Malgudi. His clear vision to uplift Indian society through his experience of life, his clarifying triple vision of man, in relation to himself, his environment and his Gods, his widening and deepening sense of comedy gives a new dimension to his art as a novelist and exhibit his contribution through literature to witness social change. Raja Rao, a novelist, and a short story writer reveals in his work his sensitive awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhian Revolution as also thwarting or steadying pulls of past tradition. 'Kanthapura' (1938), 'The Serpent and the Rope' (1960), 'The Cat and Shakespeare' (1965) and 'The Cow of the Barricades' (1947) are the novels showcasing his heart effectively tethered to his immutable ancient moorings with the strong invisible strings of his traditional Hindu culture.

In the realm of fiction, Indian Women writers gained equal opportunity and started questioning the prominent old patriarchal domination. Achieving proficiency in English, created a platform for themselves globally as they did not confine themselves to narrate household sufferings. Their qualitative concern was added with feministic dimensions to the novels. Writers like Toru Dutt, Cornelia Sorabji, Kamala Markandaya, Shakuntala Shrinagesh became living legends for many to exercise their rights in the male dominated society to herald their thoughts through literature was a real social transition. A series of such gradual transformation slowly made Indian society step forward to modernity with Globalization and Westernisation. This positive growth was also associated with on-going irresolvable challenges.

INDIAN LITERATURE AND THE PRESENT CHALLENGES OF MODERN SOCIETY

The scope and status of Indian literature rose due to the importance given to the English language and literature in a disciplined study in college and university level. The western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought helped in the emergence of new literature. Western literature was accessible in English because of several Indian writers' successful attempts in translation. The crusaders of the contemporary and modern era including Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chetan Bhagat responded to various challenges faced by Indian society.

Increasing population and its economic contribution may not go hand in hand, but consistent efforts to tackle the problem were ever burning issues in India. Impact of Westernisation was conceived to retain Indian society not to forget one's own identity while imitating foreign culture blindly. Major challenges like Corruption, unemployment, poverty, environmental pollution, water scarcity, and a like are still prevailing in India and needs continuous attention to resolve by each and every individual.

CONCLUSION

Indian Society is complex in character due to multi-lingual aspirations. Indian writing in English could be utilized as the greatest tool to equate in the global forum. Westernisation generally doubted by imitation of western culture blindly. Indian identity should always be deep-rooted without denying progressive development of the country. Persistent efforts should be made by Indian English writers to uplift society by correcting existing follies. A keen interest is to be taken not to repeat historical mistakes in the future. National unity could be achieved with a healthy bond between readers and writers.

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