

# INDIAN ELEMENTS IN THE MAKING OF INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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## **Abstract**

*The importance of the proposed title is well known in day to day communication of ideas. We use Indian words today while speaking English. The Indian English Literature is a contest over the nature, identity and ultimately the destiny of modern India. It needs to be mentioned that there has been a movement to take Indian Writing across the globe. This natural phenomenon has caught the attention of foreign listeners and writers also. Fictional writings even representations of nature and characters in its best form by writers like Toru Dutta, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K.Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Dilip Chitre, Amitabh Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri have taken Indian writing and writers to great heights. These are efforts of several generations of Indian authors that have resulted in international success, particularly since the publication of *Midnight's children* by Salman Rushdie. The Indian writings in English have finally been accepted as an important literary endeavour. Many Indian writers have composed novels, poetry, short stories in Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Kannada etc. Infact they are the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of storytelling; through myths, legends, songs and fables. They were the modernists who preferred to think themselves as the inventors of new poetics, a new generation without literary ancestors.*

**Keywords :** *English words, Indian Elements.*

## **Introduction**

The 1950s and 1960s saw poets like Dom Moraes, P Lal, P Nandy, A K Ramanujan, K.N.Daruwalla, Kamala Das to name a few, each having a style and craftsmanship of his or her own. English has become a global means of communication .With the advent of Post Colonial situation in literature, the Indian English has got its own status as a distinct speech form. Some Indian English writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Dilip Chitre, Arun Kulatkar, Amrita Pritam, Taru Dutta, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri etc. have introduced Indian English to the West. Such writers have contributed much to the making of Indian English by using words of Indian Regional languages. Thus they have given a new dimension to the making of the Indian English.

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## Objectives

1. To show the Indianness in the making of Indian creative writing in English.
2. To emphasise the points that Indian English literature is substantially Indian.

**Methodology :** The method of this paper is analytical and descriptive.

**Significance:** The topic of this paper is of great significance because the vitality of Indian elements in Indian English literature has not been properly felt by scholars as well as serious readers.

## Discussion

Indian elements in Indian English literature have drawn the attention of serious readers as well as critics. We find the craze for doing research works on a topic like this. Some works have come out which are informative only, but the depth of study needs full concentration. Simultaneously the Indian loan words in English have also given a shape to a new phenomenon. The words and terms from around the world have been adopted into English; they are somehow learnt and passed on by ancient travellers, conquerors, missionaries. Some of the oldest human languages like Tamil, Pali, Prakrit, and Sanskrit are rooted in the present day Indian languages. It is natural that words from these ancient terms have contributed to English, we speak today. Many Indian origin words have contributed in the making of the Indian English Literature and they are greeted and accepted with a great enthusiasm by us. Words like-cummerbund, Bandana, Jodhpur, Dungarees, Pyjamas, Mantra, Pandit, Bungalow, Verandah, Jungle, Loot, Cot, Curry, Chutney, Ginger, chapatti, rikshaw etc. are some Indian root words that have been merged in the Indian English Literature.

This paper will try to focus on some works of Indian English writers who have enriched the Indian English literature by their unforgettable works. We have not forgotten Toru Dutta who has given us many memorable works. Writer Toru Dutta has prominently used several Indian words and has contributed in the making of English. Most of Toru Dutta's poems deal with Indian myths and Legends. Her works are like- *Savitri*, *Lakhman* , *Jogadhya Uma*, *The legend of Dhruba*. The story of *The Legend of Dhruba* relates the story of the prince Dhruba, the son of a less favoured queen, who scorned the position of worldly power for the sake of spiritual greatness. Toru Datta's another work the Royal ascetic and the Hind is about the failure of King Bharat's asceticism. Toru Dutta's poem Savitri is a legend .It is about Savitri, whose constancy in love and purity in thought triumphed over death. Savitri chose Satyavana as her life companion despite the opposition of Narad Muni and her own parents as Satyavana was destined to die within a year. This character Savitri has become an immortal female character for all time in Hindu scriptures.

Sri Aurobindo's handling of *Savitri-Satyavan* myth in the context of his epic '*Savitri*' is essentially Indian. The words used by him have been derived from Sanskrit. His *The Life Devine*, *Essays on Gita* are some other prominent works.

## **The Challenge**

Pritish Nandy is an Indian English poet who is the most experimental of the Indian poets writing in English. He has translated a number of poets like Amrita Pritam, Kaifi azmi, Samar Sen, Subhash Mukhapadhyaya etc.

In the same way famous writer and poetess Sarojini Naidu also has used several Indian words in her writings. Her well known poem Village Song echoes the name of 'Radha Krishna' and the river *Yamona*. These terms are to be found only in Indian myth. 'Ram re Ram' is a typical expression, used by Indian people in the movements of fear and excitement and this phrase has been skillfully used by Sarojini Naidu in the Village Song. We can see a love cry of Radha for her eternal flute player Lord Krishna in the poem Village song which is vividly clear. This picture is to be accepted in a mythical level definitely. In the poem *The Damayanti to Nala* in the *Hour of Exile*, the poet Naidu shows the problems of life and death. In Naidu's poetry we have many poems centred round the Indian scenes. *Palanquin-Bearers, Wandering singers, Indian weavers, Coromandal fishers, The snake-charmer, Corn grinders, Village Song, Harvest hymn, The Indian gypsy, Night fall in the city of Hyderabad, Street cries, Bangle sellers, The festival Serpantes, Hym to India, Lord of rain, Wandering Beggars, Lakshmi, The Festival of Sea, Kanheiya* are all taken from the Indian life. The Indian folk songs charmed Naidu as much as the picturesque scene. She is primarily a singer of songs- The nightingale of India. Naidu has written many poems on Muslim culture also. Naidu has very wisely kept her antipathies, if any, out of her poetry. Poems such as *Corn-Grinders and Pardah-Nashin* are evidently inspired by sympathy with the humble and the sufferer. She also depicts the Hindu ways of life in her poetry. In fact Naidu's poetry is the dream of a rising nation expressed in a foreign medium. In it, we have a beautiful marriage of Western culture with the Eastern idealism. The poem *Damayanti to Nala* in the *Hour of Exile* shows us two persons and their pathetic situations. These two names stand for lover and the beloved together according to Indian Folk story taken from the Mahabharata by Ved Vyasa.

Similarly Nissim Ezekiel is an Indian English poet. Poems like *Night of the Scorpion* by their vision of an everyday Indian reality expressed in an unobtrusive personal voice stand out in the readers mind as signposts indicating the direction poetry in English is likely to take in the future. With him, Indian English verse has come of age to become a part of the mainstream of the literatures of India.

Writer Kamala Das has placed herself as one of the most prominent writers in the making of English by her marvellous creativity. Kamala Das alias Kamala Suraiya was one of India's finest authors, known as the mother of modern English Indian poetry and the first Hindu woman to write frankly about sexual desire. She has been favourably compared to Sylvia Plath, the famous American Confessional poetess. The poetry of Kamala Das is most moving and tortured. She has earned fame as the voice of women's sexuality. Her autobiography *My Story* contains an open statement about the poet's efforts to define and expose the prison in which she finds herself trapped. The predominant theme of her autobiography is the difficulty of being a woman in Indian Society and finding Love.

Another prominent Indian English writer Arun Kulatkar has so far published only two books- *Jejuri* in 1976 in English and *Arun Kulatkar's Kavita* in 1976 in Marathi language. It is the poem *Jejuri* which has won the Commonwealth Poetry prize for Arun Kaletkar. Since *Jejuri* takes

all its images from a temple town of the same name near Pune in Western Maharashtra and has a picture of Khandoba -a form of Lord Shiva worshipped by Maharashtra's 'Dhangar' Community.

Although famous for his novels internationally Vikram Seth is also a successful poet. He has established himself as a reputed writer. Though an Indian, his writings are in English. He is a realist and his writings are based on contemporary events. *The Frog and the Nightingale* is one of such poems through a form of beast fable.

Similarly Jayanta Mahapatra's poems are often difficult and elliptical, draws on symbols from Orissan landscape and history, Hindu myths and philosophy. Like other Indian poets writing in English, he is bi-lingual. His poetry often becomes elliptical in an attempt to bring out the hypocrisy and prudery out of finely rendered landscapes of religion and tradition. One such interesting and well known poem by Mahapatra is *Dawn at Puri*, where the writer aims at giving a realistic portrayal of morning scene at the holy beach of Puri. The narrative of the poem presents the harsh realities and ironies of life. The poet projects a vision of grief, loss, dejection and rejection through multitude of images. The holy city Puri, with the great temple of Lord Jagannatha and the expansive sea-beach reveals the hunger, disease, death, migration shackles of socio-religious rites etc of Orissa. The dawn neither shows the beauty of the natural landscape nor the majestic beauty of the great temple. It exposes the social landscape of Orissa with its degradation, corruption, deprivation and destructions all around.

Apart from these poets there are some Indian novelists who have contributed a lot to the making of Indian English literature. R K Narayan is an eminent Indian English novelist. He makes no attempt to present India in an exotic light for the sake of foreign audience, a failing common to other Indian English Writers. He has brought a collection of legends drawn from the Mahabharata and the Puranas entitled *Gods, Demons and others* and an *English version of the Ramayana* based on the Tamil epic by Kamban. The great Indian English writer R.K. Narayan has mastered the English language. His first novel *Swami and friends* shows the presence of Indian culture and customs skilfully. His novel *Malgudi* has become an unforgettable piece of work to the novel readers in India. His another novel *The guide* also achieved a permanent position in the hearts of the readers, infact R.K. Narayan presents smiles and tears together, smiling through the tears in things and perceiving the rainbow spender of life. Another bright star in the literary firmament of India is Raja Rao who's first novel *Kanthapura* possesses several Indian words in an exquisite manner.

Anita Desai is another prolific writer whose fame specially lies in novels like- *Clear light of day* in custody and *Fasting- Feasting*. Her novels largely give a personal explanation of the 20th century history. One of her best known novel *A Devoted Son* contains an Indian term named *Halwa*, which means an Indian sweet item. She has been one of the most prolific writers of Indian writing in English. Her style of writing is also different from many Indian Writers. Throughout her novels, children books, and short stories Desai focuses personal problems and struggles of contemporary lives that her Indian characters must cope with. Several novels and short stories like *Fire on the Mountain, Games at Twilight and other Stories* etc. possess this very spirit.

Amrita Pritam in her book *Fifty Fragrances of Innerself* published by Hindi pocket Books, Delhi, 2000 has introduced many words of Indian context. The different sub titles like-*Adi-Leela*, *Prashna-Leela*, *Anusuya*, *Dev-Anand*, *Asthavakra*, *Nath-Leela*, *Hajrat Rabia Basri*, *Meera*, *Farid*, *A Sadhu* have included words of Indian myths and legends. **Adi-Leela** is a compound word of Indian context made of two words *Adi* and *Leela*. *Adi* means the ‘first’ and ‘Leela’ means “something mysterious”. The concerning Gods are the ‘Lord Bishnu’ and ‘Lord Shiva’. Their mysterious meeting was related to the Devine mystery. They themselves could understand about what they talked together. Last of all, Lord Bishnu returned back to His Baikuntha and Lord Shiva set out for the Kailasha Parbata. This has been termed as *Adi-Leela* by Amrita Pritam. **Prashna-Leela** even is a compound word made of two words ‘Prashna’ and “Leela”. “Prashna” means the “question” and “Leela” means ‘something mysterious’. The mythical story behind the title of the fragment is related to talk between Devi Parvati and Lord Shiva. Devi, asking a question about the existence of Kauliki energy that governs this entire Universe, requested Lord Shiva to explain the Leela. Lord Shiva, giving a description of the unanswerable element which is the basis of all answers asked Devi to listen to the same answer, The *Question-Answer* was called *Prashna-Leela*.

With the publication of MulkRaj Anand’s *Untouchable* and *Coolie* and Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*, the novels in English may be said to have come of age. Today the Indian Novelist’s writing in English are large in number. MulkRaj Anand has tried to solve the problem of medium by Indianisation of English words, by literal translation into English of Indian expressions, proverbs etc. He does not write Baboo English, but successfully transmutes into English, the idioms, the rhythm and the tone of the natural speech of the characters. He does achieve an Indian idiom with its distinct echo of regional speech without lapsing into vulgarisms. Other Indian novelists in English are trying to solve the problems in their own way, so that their language may become a suitable medium for expression of the emotional and intellectual life of Indians. R K Narayan writes ‘admirably clean English’, that sort of English which he finds serves his purpose admirably.

Indian prose writers are also not lagging behind in this respect. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Sarbapalli Radhakrishnan, N C Chaudhary have extended lot in the making of Indian English Literature. The *Discovery of India* by Nehru is a great influential piece forever for us. As thinker and writer, as ducationist and statesman, S.Radhakrishnan was one of the leading lights of his time and will have his secure place in the history of modern India. *An Idealist View of Life* is one of his great works.

A scholar with bold and iconoclastic theories on religion and culture of India, N C Chaudhary is one of the most conscious craftsmen among Indian writers in English prose. He came into prominence in 1951 with his *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. His *To Live or Not To Live* is a treatise on social and family relations in India and advances suggestions as to how they can be changed towards better and greater happiness and fulfilment.

Khushwant Sing has given us a number of memorable and influencing works. His *The Portrait of a Lady* shows his use of many Indian words like ‘chapttis’. Salman Rushdie’s novels are said to be the storehouse of many past and recent events. His *Midnight Children* is one of his

masterpieces. Similarly we credit Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri's works also and their contributions are not to be forgotten.

Thus we have seen that the shaping factors of Indian English literature are Indian Folk literature, myths, legends etc. The handling of these elements has given a new dimension to Indianness. Indian words, names, articles are vitally present in Indian creative writings in English. The above discussed writers have given us marvellous literary works blended with Indian myth and philosophy. The above discussion leads us to the conclusion that Indian elements have shaped English distinctly.

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