

## Folk element in 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, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri have taken Indian writing and writers to great height. 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 writers 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. In fact they are the chief upholders of a rich oral tradition of storytelling; through myths, legends, songs and fables. They have introduced folk elements in 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.

**Keywords:** Folk elements, English words

### Introduction

Today Indian writing in English has gained not only momentum but also popularity. It is powerful enough to find a place in the syllabi of many universities all over the world, especially in India. Its contribution to world literature is so great that it has got a berth in common wealth literature. The term Indo-Anglian literature denotes original literary creation of Indians in English language as a medium of expression of their experience has been increasing day by day. Their writing has now acquired a status of independent literature. 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, Khuswant Singh, Anita Desai, Amrita Pritam, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Kamla Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri etc. have introduced Indian English and folk element at their best. Such writers have contributed much to the making of Indian English by using words of Indian regional languages. This paper will try to focus on some 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 Dhruva.

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 typically expression,

used by Indian people in the moments of fear and excitement and this phrase has been skilfully used by Sarojini Naidu in the *Village Song*. We can see a love cry of Radha for her eternal flute player Lord Krishna in a poem *Village Song* which is vividly clear. This picture is to be accepted in a mythical level definitely. In the poem *Damayanti to Nala* in the *Hour of Exile*, the poetess Naidu shows the problems of life and death. The Indian folk songs charmed Naidu as much as picturesque seen. She is primarily a singer of songs- The Nightingale of India.

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 India 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 marvelous creativity. 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 by being a woman

in Indian Society and finding Love. Vikram Seth, famous for his novels internationally, 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.

Sri Aurobindo's handling of Savitri- Satyawana myth in the context of his epic '*Savitri*' is essentially Indian. The words used by him have been derived from Sanskrit. 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 work *Dawn at Puri* is a finest example of Indian element in English

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, in fact 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 who's first novel *Kanthapura* possesses several Indian folk 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

With the publication of Mulk Raj 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. Mulk Raj 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 Babu 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.

Indian prose writers are also not lagging behind in this respect. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Sarvapalli 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 educationist and statesman, S. Radhakrishnan was one of the leading lights of his time and will have secure place in the history of modern India. *An Idealist View of Life* is one of his great works. Khushwant Singh has given us a number of memorable and influencing works. His *The*

*Portrait of a Lady* shows his use of many Indian words like 'chapattis'. 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 Indian English literature distinctly.

## References

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