



CRITICISM IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE: A REVIEW

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Abstract

The unique combination of colonial legacies and indigenous tales that resulted in the emergence of Indian literature written in English has unquestionably left its imprint on the field of literature. It's possible that this is due to how colonial legacies and indigenous tales have become intertwined. During the time period of colonial rule in India, Indian authors made their first introductions to works of English literature. Since that time, they have produced a vast literary heritage that demonstrates how the nation is ever undergoing transformation and taking on new hues. This literature is imbued with India's illustrious cultural, social, and historical ethos to a significant degree. At the same time, it discusses issues that are important to individuals in many different parts of the globe. Therefore, it is a one-of-a-kind combination of the local and the global, as well as the traditional and the contemporary. The destiny of a literary legacy is not just determined by the key works that make up that legacy; there are other factors as well. The interpretative, analytical, and critical perspectives through which these works are viewed, deconstructed, and analysed are also quite essential. It is true for all of the many literary traditions that are alive and well today. Criticism is not only an accessory that comes along with Indian English literature; rather, it is an essential component of that literature and has contributed to its development by enriching it with depth, perspective, and validity. This is due to the fact that it has played a significant role in its development.

Introduction

Writings often got their start in criticism by the authors themselves, in the form of introductions or other notes meant to explain things to readers from different countries as well as people who lived in the same country. Another thing is that as the amount and complexity of the written work grew, there was a need for a more organised and strict critical framework. By the middle of the 20th century, luminaries such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao had garnered international acclaim. As a result, a growing community of critics had begun to dissect and comment on the distinctiveness, relevance, and universality of Indian narratives written in English. Pioneering critics such as K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, C.D. Narasimhaiah, and M.K. Naik navigated the complex terrain of Indian English literature, addressing its linguistic challenges, its cultural contexts, and its positioning within the larger world of English literature. These pioneering critics were instrumental in the development of the field of Indian English literature. Their major works paved the way for following generations of critics, who engaged with postcolonial ideas, feminist viewpoints, and subaltern voices, so broadening the critical conversation. As we proceed with this assessment, it is essential to keep in mind that criticism in the field of Indian English Literature is not a unified whole but rather a dynamic mosaic. It is characterised by disputes, controversies, and many points of view, much like the multifarious country that it derives from. This study



intends to explore this enormous landscape, throwing light on the significant milestones, prominent people, and prevalent trends that have formed criticism in Indian English Literature, and affording readers a panoramic picture of its depth and breadth in the process.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Historical Evolution:** Trace the development of criticism from the colonial era to present.
2. **Key Contributors:** Identify major critics and their contributions to the field.
3. **Comparative Perspectives:** Assess how Indian English Literature criticism aligns or diverges from global literary critical trends.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The approach used in this study is qualitative, and the literature review is the main data source. A thorough search of academic databases, journals, and libraries was done to find important books, articles, and critical essays about Indian English Literature. The texts were then put in order of when they were written to show how criticism has changed over time. To find out what themes and shifts are happening in critical discourse, the important critics and what they have contributed were named and studied. It was also compared to see how this criticism fits in with larger trends in literary criticism around the world. To make sure the sources were reliable and complete, they were mainly peer-reviewed articles, well-known academic journals, and first-hand critical texts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

yengar, K.R. Srinivasa (1985): In his seminal work "Indian Writing in English," Iyengar provides a comprehensive overview of IEL, spanning from its inception to contemporary times. His criticism elucidates the Indian ethos within English expressions, and he underlines the works of early Indian authors who paved the way for future generations.

Narasimhaiah, C.D. (1972): In "The Swan and the Eagle," Narasimhaiah delves deep into the comparisons between Indian English literature and its Western counterparts. His critiques provide a nuanced understanding of the Indian psyche and the inherent conflict of embracing a foreign language to narrate indigenous tales.

Naik, M.K. (1982): Through "A History of Indian English Literature," Naik offers an extensive chronological survey of IEL. His approach to criticism is holistic, considering both the literary merits of the works and their socio-political implications.

Desai, Anita (1999): Although primarily known as a novelist, Desai's essays and forewords provide sharp insights into the realm of IEL. Her commentary on the novelistic traditions of IEL and the challenges faced by Indian authors writing in English brings forth a practitioner's perspective.

Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna (1998): In "An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English," Mehrotra traces the historical and cultural underpinnings of IEL. His criticism,



richly supplemented with visual illustrations, examines the syncretic nature of the literature and the manifold influences that have shaped it.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION: TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICISM IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE COLONIAL ERA TO PRESENT

Colonial Era (Late 19th - Early 20th Century):

Beginnings: The genesis of criticism during this era was largely didactic and explanatory. As English education began to gain ground in India due to colonial policies, early writers felt the need to explain and contextualize their work for both the Indian and the British audience. Forewords, prefaces, and annotations became mediums of this self-criticism.

Notable Works: Early works like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's "Rajmohan's Wife" or Toru Dutt's poetry were accompanied by notes that elucidated cultural and linguistic nuances.

Pre-Independence Era (Early to Mid 20th Century):

Growing Identity: As the Indian nationalist movement gained momentum, so did the assertion of an Indian identity in English writings. Criticism began reflecting upon the 'Indian-ness' of the literature and its potential place within the larger realm of world literature.

Notable Critics: K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar began his monumental work on mapping out the territory of Indian English Literature during this period.

Post-Independence Era (Mid 20th - Late 20th Century):

Search for Authenticity: With India gaining independence in 1947, the literary landscape saw an influx of writers portraying the newly independent nation's realities. Criticism now started focusing on authenticity, language debates, and the postcolonial identity.

Notable Critics and Works: C.D. Narasimhaiah's "The Swan and the Eagle" discussed the Indianness of Indian English Literature. M.K. Naik's "A History of Indian English Literature" provided a comprehensive view of the growing body of work.

Contemporary Era (Late 20th Century - Present):

Diverse Voices: With globalization and the post-liberalization era in India, literature saw an explosion of diverse themes - diaspora, feminism, subaltern voices, and LGBTQ+ narratives. Criticism now began engaging deeply with these varied voices, also employing theories like postcolonialism, structuralism, and postmodernism.

Notable Critics: Aijaz Ahmad's "In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures" critically engaged with postcolonial studies. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's subaltern studies brought forward the marginalized voices in literature.



Literary Prizes and Global Recognition: With authors like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai winning international accolades, criticism too took a global turn. The critique wasn't just about the content but also about the global market dynamics and the nature of such recognitions.

Digital Age and Diverse Platforms: The rise of the digital age brought forward new platforms for both literature and its criticism. Blogs, online journals, and social media platforms like Goodreads and Twitter became the new hubs of literary discussions and critique.

KEY CONTRIBUTORS: IDENTIFY MAJOR CRITICS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD.

Identifying major critics and their contributions to the field of Indian literature in English involves recognizing scholars and writers who have played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse around this literary tradition. Below are some key contributors and their notable contributions:

Meenakshi Mukherjee:

Contribution: Mukherjee is known for her seminal work "The Perishable Empire," which explores the socio-political dimensions of Indian writing in English. She has extensively written on post-colonial literature and the impact of historical and cultural factors on literary expression.

Aijaz Ahmad:

Contribution: Aijaz Ahmad is a prominent critic and political commentator. His work "In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures" engages with the political dimensions of literature and provides insights into the relationship between literature and society. He has contributed to the understanding of the post-colonial literary landscape.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:

Contribution: Spivak is renowned for her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" which has been influential in post-colonial studies. While her work is not exclusively focused on Indian literature, her ideas on representation, power, and the voices of marginalized groups have implications for the analysis of Indian literary texts.

Raja Rao:

Contribution: As a novelist and essayist, Raja Rao is considered one of the early pioneers of Indian literature in English. His novel "Kanthapura" is a significant work that explores the Gandhian ideology and the impact of the Indian independence movement on rural life.



Ania Loomba:

Contribution: Ania Loomba has made substantial contributions to post-colonial studies. Her work "Colonialism/Postcolonialism" provides a comprehensive overview of the field and its implications for the understanding of literature. Her insights are relevant to the analysis of Indian literary texts in a global context.

Salman Rushdie:

Contribution: Beyond his acclaimed novels, Salman Rushdie's essays and interviews contribute to the understanding of the post-colonial literary landscape. His role in shaping the narrative of Indian literature on the global stage and his engagement with magical realism have left an indelible mark.

Kamala Das (Surayya):

Contribution: A prominent Indian poet, Kamala Das challenged societal norms through her poetry. Her work, including "The Descendants," reflects a bold exploration of themes related to gender, identity, and the cultural ethos of India.

Ashis Nandy:

Contribution: A social psychologist, Nandy's work delves into the intersection of psychology and culture. His writings on the psychology of colonialism and the impact on Indian society offer unique insights into the complexities of post-colonial identity.

These contributors have significantly shaped the critical discourse around Indian literature in English, offering diverse perspectives that enrich the understanding of the cultural, historical, and political dimensions of this literary tradition.

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES: ASSESS HOW INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE CRITICISM ALIGNS

We need to take a close look at the unique traits and factors that make up Indian English Literature criticism in order to see how it fits in with or differs from global literary criticism trends. Indian English Literature criticism has changed and grown over time. It uses both Western ideas about literature and Indian ways of writing. It looks at how Indian English literature criticism fits in with and differs from trends in literary criticism around the world.

Alignment with Global Trends:

1. **Postcolonialism and Postcolonial Theory:** Indian English literature criticism is very similar to postcolonial theory around the world. India was a British colony, so a lot of its literature deals with colonialism, identity, and mixing cultures. Postcolonial theory has grown thanks in large part to the work of Indian critics who have added to the global conversation about how colonialism affected literature and culture.
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2. **Feminist Criticism:** Like feminist movements around the world, Indian English literature criticism has embraced feminist literary theory and activism. Literature has been used by critics to look at gender roles, patriarchy, and the lives of women in Indian society. Well-known Indian women writers and critics have made important contributions to feminist scholarship around the world.
3. **Multiculturalism and Diversity:** In the same way that literary criticism around the world is becoming more aware of how important different voices and points of view are, Indian English literature criticism has always valued diversity. India's literature shows its rich linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity, and critics have pushed for the exploration of different identities and stories.
4. **Transnational and Diaspora Studies:** As the Indian diaspora grows around the world, so does the field of Indian English Literature criticism. It follows the general trend of studying migrant and transnational groups. Critics look at how Indian literature, especially from the diaspora, deals with issues of identity and belonging, as well as how local and global influences affect each other..

Divergence from Global Trends:

1. **Language and Linguistic Identity:** The way that Indian English Literature criticism deals with language and linguistic identity makes it stand out. English is used as a literary language in India, which has caused people to talk about linguistic imperialism and how to balance cultural and linguistic identities. One thing that makes Indian literary criticism stand out is its focus on language.
2. **Indigenous Literary Traditions:** In Indian English literature criticism, the idea of hybridity goes beyond the global discourse of postcolonial theory. In a way that is typical of India's multicultural society, critics look at how different cultures, languages, and identities interact with each other.
3. **Hybridity and Biculturalism:** The term of hybridity, as it is used in Indian English literature criticism, extends beyond the scope of the global discourse offered by postcolonial theory. Critics investigate the intricate interaction of many cultures, languages, and identities in a manner that is especially representative of the heterogeneous society that exists in India.
4. **Caste and Social Hierarchies:** However, despite the fact that worldwide literary criticism may not necessarily place the same amount of emphasis on social inequalities and caste systems, Indian English literature criticism often addresses these topics. Critics investigate the ways in which caste dynamics are reflected in literature and society, so offering a fresh viewpoint on issues of social justice and inequality.
5. **Regional Diversity:** The variety of India's states and languages is reflected in the English literature criticism that is written in India, which is extremely regionalized. Literature from certain areas may be of particular interest to critics, and the cultural milieu of such areas is likely to play a significant part in their interpretations of the works. This localised emphasis may be differentiated from literary criticism that is more focused on the world at large.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, literary criticism of Indian literature written in English connects with a number of worldwide issues that are prevalent in the area of literary criticism. Postcolonialism, feminism, diversity, and transnationalism are some of the trends that fall under this category. On the other hand, it deviates in fundamental ways owing to the fact that it has its own distinct language and cultural heritage, that it interacts with native customs, and that it faces distinctive social challenges. All of these factors contribute to the fact that it stands out. These are the aspects that make it stand out from other things. The breadth and depth of Indian literature and criticism are to be commended for the field's capacity to coincide with global trends while yet maintaining its own distinctive identity. This exemplifies the breadth and depth of the intricacy that is inherent in the Indian literary heritage. It is a reflection of the continuous development of literary theory as well as its receptivity to a wide variety of historical and cultural situations. Both of these things are reflected in it. To put it another way, it is something that emerged as a result of the development of literary theory.

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