

# THE EMERGENCE OF NEW LITERATURE IN INDIA DURING THE RENAISSANCE

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**Abstract-** The Age of Renaissance! What word could be more electrifying and venerable than this one? With the advent of the Renaissance, the West began its ascent to fame and never turned back. As Europe continued to earn more and more accolades, the splendor of Asia began to fade. "The revival of art and letters, under the influence of the classical models, which began in Italy in the 14th century," is how the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term. The phrase, however, describes "a complete shift in man's perspective on life which extended into philosophical, scientific, economic, and technical fields" in its broadest sense. The Renaissance, which has altered the world in many ways, is arguably the most powerful movement of the last millennium. But this time, India was suffering through what may have been the darkest chapter in her lengthy history, while the West was experiencing its full splendor of ceaseless activity. This enormous area was in complete decadence throughout the 18th century, which is considered to be "the lowest point of moral decay and political weakness." However, a new India started to take shape on the day the British conquered the country. The dormant Oriental spirit had to get rid of its torpor as the Western influences poured in. Similar to how darkness dissipates when light emerges; the Western rational worldview began expelling all of the terrible superstitions that had ensnared India's spirit. This paper focuses on the Emergence of new Literature in India during the Renaissance

**Index Terms-** Indian Renaissance

## I. INTRODUCTION

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) is credited with founding modern-day India. He has been dubbed "the promulgator of the Modern Age in Indian history" with good reason. A true Renaissance man, he was a multi-talented genius who knew Hebrew and Greek and was fluent in Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit, giving him knowledge of the two main religions of the country. In addition, he studied Tibetan Lamaist Buddhism as part of his pursuit of the Truth. Above all, though, he developed a strong command of the English language and a profound comprehension of European metaphysics. Therefore, he exhibits a very logical approach whether he was fighting against the vile Sati practice, advocating for social reforms, or developing

his own theistic stance. He was a lifelong supporter of English-language education in India, to the point where he once objected to the establishment of a government Sanskrit college.

Undoubtedly, English education ushered in a new era in Indian history. Through the English language, vibrant Western ideas flooded into the country, setting India on her modern path. Through this medium, the European Enlightenment's twin instruments of liberalism and rationalism flooded into India, thoroughly sculpting our country. "English education brought about a widening of the Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and institutions, a revolt against certain customs and aspects of Indian life, and growing demand for political reforms," is how Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru aptly says it.

The Indian Renaissance had distinct characteristics of its own and was not a perfect replica of the European one. As a result of the meeting or clash of the East and the West, a new culture emerged that combined the best aspects of both: "We find the emergence of a new India out of this clash of the new mechanical civilization of the Occident and the old pietistic and religious culture of India." As we have seen, Western liberalism and rationality gave the Indian mindset a new direction and prompted significant investigation into the wisdom of the original people. The kind of communion of the Orient and the Occident that took place in India is absent in the European Renaissance, described by Sri Aurobindo as "not so much a reawakening as an overturn and reversal, a seizure of Christianised, Teutonised, feudalised Europe by the old Graeco-Latin spirit and form with all the complex and momentous results which come from it," lacked the kind of communion between the Orient and the Occident that occurred in India. Despite all of the Western influences, India managed to hold onto her spiritual core. In this regard, India stands in stark contrast to Japan, which became heavily westernized and, in a sense, abandoned its traditional

morning rituals. Sri Aurobindo points out this uniqueness of the Indian Renaissance thus:

It is "rather a process of a new creation in which the spiritual power of the Indian mind remains supreme, recovers its truths, accepts whatever it finds sound or true, useful or inevitable of the modern idea or form, but so transmutes and Indianises it, so absorbs and transforms it that its foreign character disappears and it becomes another harmonious element in the characteristic working of the ancient goddess, the Shakti of India, mastering and taking possession of the modern influence, no longer possessed or overcome by it."

The literature of the country has also flourished during the Indian Renaissance. Both linguistically and literarily, the dozen or so native languages have advanced greatly as a result of it. The most notable, however, has been the emergence of a brand-new literary genre that Dr. K.R.S. Iyengar correctly named Indo-Anglian. Like American or Australian literature, Indo-Anglo literature has its own unique personality. Above all, it has been successful in recapturing the Indian ethos and is therefore entirely "autochthonous," to use Edmund Gosse's term for Sarojini Naidu's poetry. Indo-Anglian poetry has reflected the breadth of our huge country since its inception. Notably, H.L.V. Derozio, the first Indo-Anglian poet, was born to a Portuguese father and an Indian mother. Highly patriotic lyrics were written by the youthful poet who passed away at the young age of 21.

My country! In thy days of glory past  
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow,  
And worshipped as a deity thou wast—  
Where is that glory, where that reverence now?

Derozio was a professor of English at the Hindu College in Calcutta. He worked so hard and passionately that he was rightfully credited with creating modern Bengal. "In fact, Mr. Derozio gained such a great ascendancy over the minds of his pupils, that they would not move even in their private affairs without his advice," writes Haramohan Chatterjee, a contemporary. However, by promoting their literary tastes and teaching them about the negative consequences of worship and superstition, he transformed their moral sentiments to the point where they were entirely above the outdated concepts and goals of the time. His instructions were so strong that his students behaved admirably while they were not in college.

The two poetry books that Michael Madhusudan Dutt authored are *Visions of the Past* and *Lady in Captivity*. Despite having an Indian premise, *The Captive Ladie*, which tells the tale of Prithvi Raj Chauhan and Samyogita, is replete with references to English Romantic poetry. It is in the style of Byron's verse-tales. *The Visions of the Past* is just as copycat and lacks unique flavor. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* by Romesh Chunderdutt exhibit a certain level of growth in Indo-Anglian poetry. Romesh was an I.C.S. who was proficient in both Sanskrit and English. His condensation is therefore believable. He was also the first to deal with the great epics' stories. The tradition he established blossomed in Dr. K.R.S. Iyengar's *Sitayana* and Sri Aurobindo's epic sublime *Savitri*.

Romesh's second cousin, Toru Dutt, is the next well-known poet. She was born on March 4, 1856, into a distinguished family, and began writing poetry at a young age. But in August 1877, she passed away too soon. Despite having a very brief lifespan, she made a substantial contribution to the development of Indo-Anglian poetry with her single collection of poems, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*.

All of Toru's poems are based on the Puranic stories, despite the fact that she came from a family that had just become Christian. More than anything else, the Indian Renaissance made Indians aware of their indigenous heritage, as demonstrated by Toru's treatment of the wholly native puranic subjects. Toru's genuine sensibility and, more importantly, her authenticity have earned her a prominent position in Indo-Anglian poetry. Toru was starting a tradition that flourished magnificently in works like Dr. Iyengar's *Sitayan*, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, and Tagore's *Gitanjali*, to mention a few. Sarojini Naidu (1870–49), a well-known patriot and freedom fighter, was another female poet who made a significant contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry. Her lyricism enhanced Indo-Anglian poetry at that early stage, and Mahatma Gandhi referred to her as the Nightingale of India for her lovely poetic eloquence.

She released her first collection of poems, *The Golden Threshold*, in 1905. The book was dedicated to Edmund Gosse and had an introduction by Arthur Symonds. The book consists of forty poems organized under three headings: "Poems," "Songs for Music," and "Folk Songs." In 1912, the same publisher published the subsequent *Bird of Time*, which included 46 poems and

a preface by Edmund Gosse. Sarojini "is in all things and to the fullest extent autochthonous," according to Gosse. She is a native of India; her spirit has no other connection to the West, even though it uses English as a medium. Her final poetry collection, *The Broken Wing*, came out in 1917. She nearly stopped writing poetry after that, but in 1962, a small collection of her poems—all written in 1927—was published posthumously. With the release of *The Broken Wing*, Sarojini said goodbye to the Poetic Muse due to "the incompatibility between her real self and the artificial medium she had learned to master."

It is accurate to refer to Rabindranath Tagore, one of the great writers of the Indian Renaissance, as an Indo-Anglian poet. For his English translation of *Gitanjali*, which was initially written in Bengali, he was awarded the Nobel Prize. The spiritual side of the Indian Renaissance is revealed in *Gitanjali*'s mysterious and intensely devotional poetry. They exhibit the influence of Kabir's mysticism, even though they have the sweetness of Vidyapati and Chandi Das' lyrics:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again,  
and fillest it ever with fresh life.

The "vessel" here is the human body which God empties and fills again and again. The homely image has a native flavour. The poet's devotional fervour ever seasons his mysticism, thus obviating all obscurity:

Pluck this flower and take it, delay not! I fear  
lest it drop and droop into dust.

Here is an example of ultimate dedication to love. For the flower here is the poet's own life which he wants to offer for God's worship. Tagore's God is all-inclusive. So, he does not advocate escapism in any form:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of  
beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely  
dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?  
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before  
thee!

Given that they are both mystics, the journey from Tagore to Sri Aurobindo shouldn't be too difficult. However, in addition to being a poet, Sri Aurobindo is also a Rishi, and his metaphysical roots are much stronger. In fact, he has the advantage of firsthand knowledge of both the East and the West due to his extensive command of not just English but also Greek and Latin in addition to his command of Sanskrit. His thorough understanding of both the ancient and the new is attested to by the extensive corpus of philosophical

writings, which includes the monumental *Life Divine*. The majority of his poetical works are equally powerful. He has written the longest epic in the English language, which is over 24,000 lines long, in addition to a number of lyrical works and narrative poetry. According to Prof. R.F. Piper, Savitri, his poetic masterpiece, is "possibly the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the Absolute."<sup>16</sup> Once more, according to Aurobindonian metaphysics, "it documents the development of human consciousness towards the achievement of the Life Divine; and it is as much a cosmic poem as Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, and perhaps more broadly applicable to the universal human condition;..."

*Savitri* is one of the most distinctive poems in the entire literary canon. Because no such attempt was ever made. Undoubtedly, the ancient Greeks also extolled the virtues of humanity. However, they were unable to delve into the amazing depths of the human soul. Actually, they were unable to examine those rediscovered spiritual areas because it was outside the purview of their scientific investigation. As a result, Sri Aurobindo's philosophical scope is genuinely cosmic. For the first time in literary history, he was trying to create a work that would reveal the essence of humanity by illuminating the dark recesses of his complex self that conceal the forces that constantly pull him down from the heights he frequently reaches but is unable to maintain. Man is frequently a villain and rarely a hero. Since they both represent the same spiritual principle and other things, the hero and the villain are one and the same in Sri Aurobindo's cosmic worldview. According to Sri Aurobindo, "all verily is Brahman," an Upanishadic dictum. This worldview holds that God is manifest in the universe.

Another poet who deserves to be included in this overview of Indo-Anglian poetry is Sarojini Naidu's younger brother, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. He was born on April 2, 1898, making him almost twenty years younger than his famous sister. Like her, he began writing poetry at a young age. At the age of 13, he published his first collection of poetry, *The Coloured Garden*. He shared his sister's strong Romantic traits and was similarly influenced by Victorian and Romantic poets. He eventually developed a sincere appreciation for the Sanskrit classics as well. Harindra's mystic inclination was further bolstered when he traveled to Cambridge to study Blake's poetry. In his autobiographical book *'Life and Myself'*, he states, understandably: "... I have always held an

almost continuous vision of the one-behind-the-many and the One broken into the Many.”

By this point, Indo-Anglian poetry has developed into a distinct genre. Therefore, it is not possible to include all of the prominent poets in this review, which aims to illustrate the Indian Renaissance's distinctively spiritual turn. This type of renaissance has been occurring repeatedly to revitalize the vast spiritual heritage that India embodies, according to Sri Aurobindo. And her wonderful message is quite evident:

The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, not by harnessing forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of the intellect and the spirit, by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within spiritual Nature.

The Renaissance that has roused India from her lethargy, according to Sri Aurobindo, has international significance because "she can, if she will give a new and decisive turn to the problems over which all mankind is laboring and stumbling ...." Because, in Eliot's famous words, she must save the world from the grotesque materialism that has made it a genuine "waste land." The people of the world must learn from India how "to make life perfect with a divine perfection."

## II. CONCLUSION

Thus, the Indian Renaissance is a singular occurrence. The Indian Renaissance must bring spiritual enlightenment if the European Renaissance brought material riches to the world. Additionally, the development and emergence of Indo-Anglian poetry reflects, among other things, the spiritual desires of the Indian psyche, which will assist all of humanity in separating itself from the current material chaos. Both Dr. Iyengar's *Sitayana* and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* depict man's eternal spiritual handiwork. It demonstrates the intensely spiritual nature of the Indian Renaissance and its great vigor that epics like *Savitri* and *Sitayans* could have been written during these grotesquely material times.

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