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Indian Knowledge System in English Language and Literature

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Abstract:

In this article an attempt is made to enlighten Indian knowledge system in English language and literature. If the study of English whether by a select few or larger numbers is to be profitably pursued in this country, its basis has to be made sure. First things should come first at any cost. I have expounded as lucidly and simply as possible the basic truths. There are 3 types of criticism viz., 1) Legislative criticism 2) Aesthetic criticism and 3) Descriptive criticism

Introduction:

At the outset I must mention in all gratitude eminent authors for their contribution to Indian writing in English. They include 1) Rammohan Roy 2) Toru Dutt 3) Ramesh Chander Dutt 4) Manmohan Ghose 5) Rabindranath Tagore 6) Sri Aurobindo 7) Savitri 8) Sarojini Naidu 9) Mahatma Gandhi 10) Jawaharlal Nehru 11) Mulk Raj Anand 12) Rk Narayan 13) Rajarao 14) Bhabhani Bhatta charya 15) Monohar Malgonkar 16) Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan 17) Raghu Nathan 18) Nirad Chaudhuri 19) Anand 20) Narayan 21) Raju Rao. Also, famous Indian women novelists 1) Suzanna Arundathi Roy 2) Nilanjana Sudeshna Jhumpa lahari 3) Anitha Desai 4) Anitha Nair and 5) Kavita Kane are to be specially mentioned. Needless to say Arundathi Roy won Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997 for her very first novel “The God of Small Things”.

Indeed it is true that verse art or the art of poetry is more ancient than prose art although people have been unconsciously talking prose since the beginning of human speech. It is recorded prose that is more than verse or poetry. Indian prose writing in English came earlier than writing in verse and prose writers are far more numerous than the poets and poetasters.

2 centuries ago sundry Indians simply had to learn to speak or write in English but literary expression whether in prose or in verse was only a later development.

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Talented Indians learned to use the English medium for translation,petitioning,Journalism,Law ,Oratory,Political Education, Social Reform Propaganda and Educational, Historical and Philosophical studies. A disciplined study of English language and literature in the new colleges and universities meant for its beneficiaries the end of insularity and the streaming in of western thought currents and in the result there was witnessed the first stirring of a transvaluation of values.The emergence of the English educated in different parts of the subcontinent meant also the gradual raise of an all India elite, many of whom were able to rise above regional,Linguistic ,religious and caste barriers and think in terms of one India,a self-governing India and a democratic India.

There were no doubt many scholars in Sanskrit and Persian and Arabic,scholars also in the great indigenous languages and they were unassailable on their own ground and they carried the torch of tradition with commendable integrity and fervour.Yet even they found as years passed,that a knowledge of English could give a new dimension to their intellectual equipment and a new power to their utterance.As Dr Mohini Mohan Bhatta Charje said in the course of a lecture in 1953: So far as literary creation goes,it is worthy of note that it has been almost the monopoly of people well-grounded in English.No sanskrit ignorant of English has contributed anything worth the name to modern Bengali or any other modern Indian creative literature.Treaties on grammar or composition or school texts have indeed been written by many commentaries on Sanskrit works too have been produced by some together with translations of religious work etc.. But original work had always had as authors persons well-versed in English literature.Mention may be made of Michael Madhusudan,Bankine,Tagore in Bengal ,Premchand in Bihar,Bhai Bir Singh in Punjab and others.These have invented new idioms and techniques and have often made daring departures from old literary practices.Drama,epic,lyric the short story,the novel of adventure,the psychological novel-all reveal the influence of the West,of England,of France,of Belgium and today even of Russia.The Western impact,the infusion of English literature and European thought and the resulting cross fertilization have thus been the means of quickening the interplay and circulation of ideas and the emergence of new literature, a new climate of hope and endeavor in the country, a bold marching towards new horizons.

Literature-Poetry,Drama,Fiction can be enjoyed in two ways viz.,haphazardly as a layman enjoys it and methodically as a trained man does.In the one case the impression of its worth is vague even confused, in the other it is fully accounted for.It is this latter mode of enjoying it that is called criticism. A critic is

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an ideal reader.having travelled much in the realm of gold,he brings to bear a trained judgment on whatever he reads. To him no work of art is good or bad, enjoyable or unenjoyable, meaningful or meaningless unless he has subjected it to a thorough examination. Criticism therefore is born of questioning, It never takes a writer of his work on trust.Where a work is held to be Divinely inspired or revealed as in the case of the scriptures there can be no criticism. For, orthodox opinion will not permit a free discussion of it. Is the word of Gods. Hence it is that for long ages after the establishment of Christianity there was hardly a critical literature in the Bible. It was only when the renaissance encouraged interrogation and free inquiry that it began to be examined critically. Today nothing is sacrosanct to criticism.It subjects everything to the closest scrutiny. Its approach is that of science-a disinterested application to its subject to understand and interpret it fully..For criticism therefore as for science to flourish intellectual freedom is necessary. It requires an atmosphere in which questioning and inquiry are freely allowed.

To conclude, Indian knowledge system in English language and literature is cent per cent transparent, allows free and fair criticism, questioning and evaluation in as comprehensive a manner as the reader wishes.

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