

Indian Poetry in English
Prof. Binod Mishra
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee

Lecture - 01
Introduction-I

A very good morning and welcome to all the listeners, lovers and learners to the NPTEL course entitled Indian Poetry in English. You will be listening to the lectures by Binod Mishra. But, before I start the 1st lecture let me share with you some facts as to why should we read or learn poetry.?

Most of you might be thinking as to why this course on poetry? Dear friends, as human beings most of us actually crave for delight and then also for happiness. Happiness which has always been if we have to quote Thomas Hardy the famous English novelist who says: “Happiness was but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain”.

But, my dear friends, yet all of us try to extract pleasure, joy, delight in different ways, and most of you will agree with me that the changing situations and circumstances in life have actually prepared us to such a situation where to think of delight is, of course, at times ,a puzzle. And then you can come out of this puzzle by opening a world of delight through the pages of poetry by difference, my dear friends.

It is in order to neutralize the complexities of human life that poetry has come to stay my dear friends. Since poetry comprises not only joy, it also comprises pain, it comprises rest, unrest, it actually records all our lived and unlived experiences of life. That is why the course entitled Indian poetry in English will become very relevant.

And of course, in a corporate world of today when as human beings we get tired, we find there are no ways out, we find that we are in an age of anxiety, in an age of troubles, in an age where we do not see the light. Of course, we need to explore this delight in the form of light through the world of poetry.

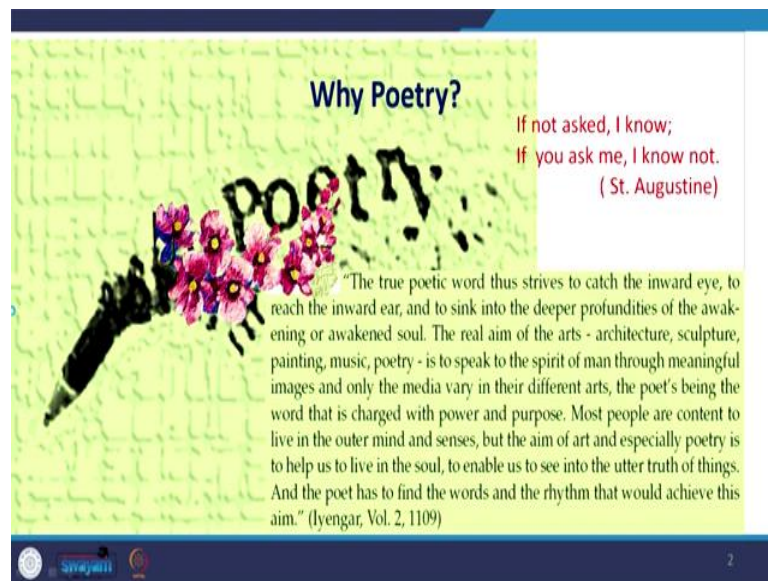
And why Indian poetry? Because all of us being Indians we actually feel the need to understand and explore the joys through our Indian culture, through our Indian writings, through the sayings of our sages, through our mythological heroes, through the legacies

that we have and we have really been proud to have all these not only in our own country, but in the world.

So, my dear friends ,that is actually why the need to have a course entitled Indian poetry in English. Now, most of you might be thinking especially those who are new to the world of poetry might be thinking what actually is poetry. Can poetry be defined? What can be the nature and scope of poetry?

So, first we shall try our level best to understand poetry and then we shall slowly come to Indian poetry. There can be end number of definitions about poetry, but one that actually I like very much is by a famous theologian and a philosopher named Saint Augustine who says, If not asked, I know; if you ask me, I know not.

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My dear friends, poetry is such a phenomena that it is very difficult to define. Though most of the poets and many critics as well, they have defined poetry. Many of you might be familiar with Wordsworth calling poetry as a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility.

If we go by what Coleridge says: Coleridge has a different view and Coleridge would say that poetry is the best word in the best order. Later on ,Coleridge would also say poetry is the antithesis of science.

Since we are doing with and dealing with Indian poetry, I thought it cannot be anything better if we quote what an Indian critic and what an exponent of Indian writing in English writes about poetry. What he says is quite relevant the true poetic world thus strives to catch the inward eye, look at the words -----“inward eye”.

To reach the inward ear, from the inward eye that you see and to reach the inward ear because the moment we talk of poetry sometimes or the other, you start having a feeling of some pleasantry in your ears and to sink into the deeper profundities of the awakening or awakened soul.

The real aim of the arts architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry is to speak the spirit of man through meaningful images and only the media vary in their different arts. The poets being the word that is charged with power and purpose. Most people are content to live in the outer mind and senses.

I think here lies the difference which many people would feel when they talk about distinguishing poetry from other forms of art and even also from science, but the aim of art and especially poetry, is to help us live in the soul.

I mean when we talk about poetry naturally majority of us start thinking that it should have something special. Not only something that can appeal to the eye and the ear, but something that can generate feelings in our heart that is why when you look at a beautiful flower, when you look at a beautiful sight, when you look at a beautiful object, when you look at a beautiful scenery think of it what sort of reaction is there in your heart.

How suddenly you feel yourself transported to a different world; the world not of reality, but maybe the world of imagination. To enable us to see into the utter truth of things and the poet has to find the words and the rhythm that would achieve this aim.

So, this in a way tells us that poetry will somehow be different and the poet will be the magician of words you know he will throw some words and that those words will enlighten you and transport you to a world of delight my dear friends.

Most of you would like to know how did this word poetry come into being. Our ancient Greek philosophers say or what they talk about the origin of poetry as the ancient Greek

word poiein that actually means to create and the Latin poem that is to compose something in verse.

Meaning thereby something which could have a melody, something which could have a sort of music, because when we talk about poetry, naturally something that comes to our mind since we have been talking about imagination being an important ingredient of poetry.

Why the other day when you looked at the rainbow suddenly you were transported into a different realm. Why you like others those people who really feel that it is only a scientific process why did you simply look at it in say it is a rainbow because it had a different sort of echoes that you felt within.

So, when we talk about or when we try to differentiate poetry as versus science we find that both poetry and science may deal with the same phenomena, but may have different approaches.

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The slide is titled "Poetry Vs. Science" and features a list of bullet points on the left and an image of a red rose on the right. The rose is labeled with the handwritten text "Hexasida Mowppina" and the question "A botanical object or a poetic object?". The slide also includes logos for "swayam" and "swayam" at the bottom left and the number "3" at the bottom right.

Poetry Vs. Science

- Both deal with the same phenomena but have different approaches.
- Suggestive and subjective-objective/ Technical and objective
- New Critics
- **I. A. Richards**- Emotive language and Scientific language
- Meaning: **Sense, Feeling, Tone and Intention**

Hexasida Mowppina
A botanical object or a poetic object?

Science will deal with the application of knowledge, science will deal with a sort of system whereas, poetry will somehow be different. Science will look at the objectivity of things, science will look at a sort of detachment ,whereas poetry will be suggestive it will suggest is not it.

Most of the poems that you might have read you will find that there is a sort of subjectivity in it fine? It is not technical for the sake of saying technicalities maybe when you talk about the form, when you talk about the style, when you talk about the metrical compositions and all ,we can say that these are the technicalities, but these technicalities finally, lead us to a world of delight where we feel a sort of musicality and this music actually entralls.

Poetry will actually touch upon because it is a world which recreates your emotion; the emotions suddenly that is created generated and a poet will recreate those emotion into a different sort of feeling into a different sort of experience. And then, this emotive language that is why I mean there can be n number of lectures on the language of poetry itself, but to say it briefly, it will touch upon the sensations is not it?

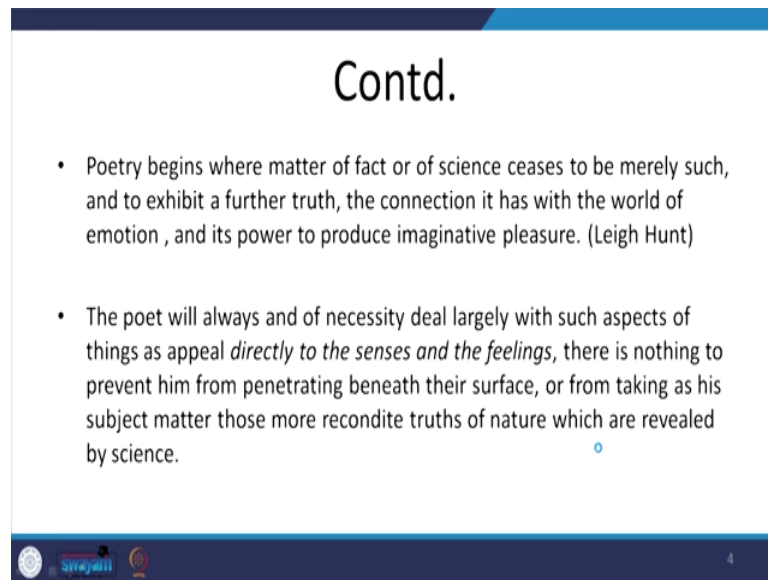
And in a way it is related to a human soul the feelings that are generated, the language at times may be scientific, but at times the language may be unscientific. When you create something which you call beautiful maybe the reactions to it will be different, say for example, here you find the picture of a flower fine ?when a poet will look at it the poet will say it is a lady of the garden, it is a flower of delight of light is not it.

But, when a scientist will say and the scientist will have a different sort of nomination for it they can go for exploring its a botanical name which can be Hexandria Monogymia fine?

But, now when you talk about this flower and you want to deal with it in a poetic way,you will find that you actually want to see it in a sort of comprehensive reality beauty in totality. I mean what sort of sense does it evoke, what sort of feeling suddenly you look at a flower and you are actually transported to a different world to some other beautiful objects maybe many poets have always you know compared the faces of their beloveds to roses you know my love is like a red, red rose No.

Sometimes, they will and you know with the help of their symbols, with the help of metaphors, with the help of several literary devices they can, they are talking of something else, but they are referring to something else that is how poetry differs from science my dear friend. Because poetic truth will completely be different from scientific truth.

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- Poetry begins where matter of fact or of science ceases to be merely such, and to exhibit a further truth, the connection it has with the world of emotion, and its power to produce imaginative pleasure. (Leigh Hunt)
- The poet will always and of necessity deal largely with such aspects of things as appeal *directly to the senses and the feelings*, there is nothing to prevent him from penetrating beneath their surface, or from taking as his subject matter those more recondite truths of nature which are revealed by science.

And it is in this regard that we can say_____ poetry begins where matter of fact or of science ceases to be merely such. Leigh Hunt; a famous English poet and critic who says that poetry begins where matter of fact or of science ceases to be merely such and to exhibit a further truth, the connection it has with a world of emotion and its power to produce imaginative pleasure.

That is why on a morning or an evening when you are passing by, when you are crossing by the seaside and you look at the waves and suddenly there are different emotions that are evoked. fine?

Maybe the scientist will say it is quite you know yes since it is sea there can be waves, but a poet will say these are the waves like the waves in my soul, here I can see my anxieties, here I can see the ups and downs, here I can see the sensations of life. My dear friends, a poet will always and of necessity deal largely with such aspects of things as which will appeal directly to the senses and the feelings.

That is why those many of you who read poetry and enjoy poetry will find that whenever you are reading a piece of poetry you are not confined only to one meaning. You are not confined only to one reaction, there can be several interpretations of one poem which you cannot find in us in something that is scientific.

There is nothing to prevent him no one can prevent a poet from penetrating beneath their surface or from taking as his subject matter those more recondite truths rather hidden truths. Can you really think when you look at a rose and its petals know and when the petals are being broken my dear friend not like the scientist you want to see from where the fragrance comes, but you actually want to see the beauty of the rose in its totality.

But, still you want to find some hidden truths; truths of nature which are revealed by science. There are a number of poems which are actually inspired by nature and you know the truths that poet have found those truths are going to be permanent, those truths are going to be relevant in all those times fine?. That is why most of the time you might be reminded of what in one of the poems entitled Rainbow. The Veteran Romantic poet says:

“My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old, Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.”

My dear friends, and then he actually relates it to human life that how know. So, was it when I was a child, so it shall be when I shall grow old and so, it shall be when I shall die. The child is the father of the man fine?

So, actually he talks about human nature and also talks about the nature that is real, the nature that is, I mean the nature in which around which we live. And you know, poets taking the background of nature and other natural objects have actually talked about so many things which perhaps scientists cannot think of because science believes in truth, it believes in the practicality of knowledge, it believes in wisdom.

Now, what is actually the function of poetry? Do we really need poetry? Do we really need art? There can be end number of questions as to if poetry is art like other forms of art should there be Art for Art's sake or Art for Life's sake.

I mean this is actually a debatable question it can be a debatable essay, but my dear friend when you look at an object with an artistic bent of mind and if you simply get yourself involved it in, being simply an art perhaps you will be ignoring the other realities. As I said in the beginning that the realities of life are changing human lives are changing.

And so, we also and of course, as we read and as we explore poetry in all ages be it from any nation you will find the reality is changing not only in terms of it's content, not only in terms of it's form, not only in terms of its interpretations, but here it is quite important to mention what Wallace Stevens said about poetry.

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The slide is titled "Function of Poetry" and discusses the debate between "Art for Art's sake" and "Art for Life's sake". It features a quote from Wallace Stevens and a graphic of a brain with a book icon labeled "Poems".

Function of Poetry

Art for Art's sake Vs. Art for Life's sake

Wallace Stevens said that poetry was one of the enlargements of life. Oscar Wilde, marvellous critic and dramatist though a weak poet, remarked that all art was perfectly useless, an irony we need not literalize. Wilde knew, better than almost all of us, that Shakespeare, Michelangelo, and Mozart are superbly useful: they give the more difficult pleasures that can persuade us to abandon pleasures that are too easy, to adopt Shelley's formulation of the Sublime mode. - Bloom

Poems

What he said was___ poetry was one of the enlargements of life. Oscar Wilde, marvelous critic and dramatist who himself was a weak poet, remarked that all art was perfectly useless, an irony we need not literalize. When you talk of poetry in general conversations and all, many people may say fine because those people who believe that poetry is simply a pastime affair or it is only a wastage of time.

But, then” Wilde knew better than almost all of us, that Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Mozart are superbly useful had it not been so, my dear friend despite the progress and the progress and the development that we have so far made poetry still continues. Poetry writing is still in a continuing process it has not come to an end. They give the more difficult pleasures that can persuade us to abandon pleasures that are too easy.”

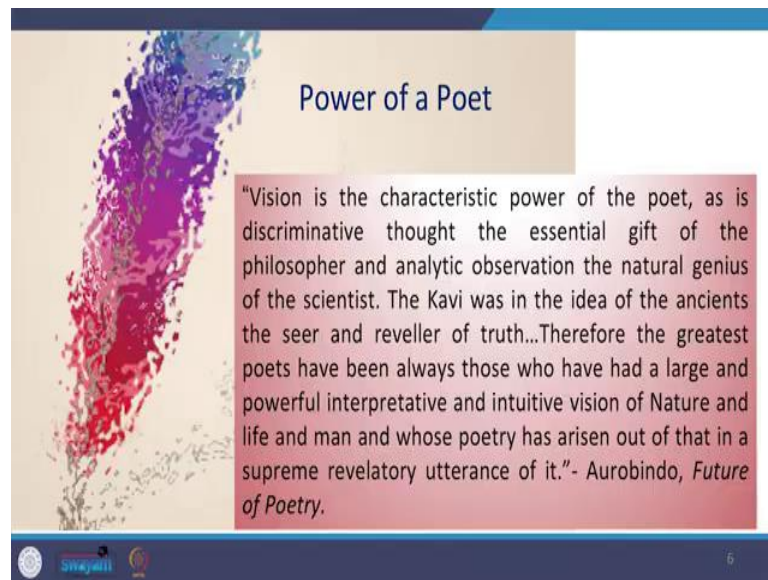
The pleasure that we derive, the satisfaction that we derive out of poetry fine is not instant my dear friend, it actually these pleasures are not easily available as other pleasures are to adopt Shelley’s formulation of the sublime mode this has been quoted from Harold Bloom.

Now, do we really or should we really consider the poet as a powerful being? What is actually the use of a poet? I mean you might be aware that there have been people who have criticized poetry, there have been critics who have actually stopped poet’s fine you might know well. But, then does the poet have some power? Yes, of course.

If we go by what Sri Aurobindo says in **Future of Poetry** “Vision is the characteristic of the poet. I mean a poet can have a vision and I will give you certain examples as to how when one of the Indian poets you know one of the Indian poets more than 100 years before wrote actually a book, a journal, it was actually by Kailash Chandra Dutt who wrote a journal of 48 hours in 1945.

And my dear friends, here he actually here the poet made use of his emotions and his imagination rather and you will find in 1947 India got independence. You will be surprised to know that how could this poet might have a vision of 1945 and that also 100 years before. So, that is actually the power of a poet.

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So, vision I was talking about; "Vision is the characteristic part of the poet, as is discriminative thought the essential gift of the philosopher and analytic observation the natural genius of the scientist. The Kavi I mean that is the Hindi word for poet the Kavi was in the idea of the ancients the seer and the reveller of" truth".

Those who are passionate lovers of poetry might have found how the poet actually looks more and looks rather further than what is not possible, that is why they have been called visionaries fine. And there are certain poems you will find not only in English, but also in Indian English poetry where you can find what the poet said some years before could happen.

So, is it not the vision therefore, the greatest poets have been always those who have had a large and powerful interpretive and intuitive vision. Do not you remember my dear friends when Shelley wrote that poem. Shelley's famous poem 'Ode to the West Wind' fine and there when he talks about the difficulties on his own of his own life, when he says "oh make me a lyre what if my leaves are falling like the forest".

But, many people might consider and rather think that Shelley was a pessimist, but towards the end you see what sort of vision did he give when he says, can spring "if winter comes can spring be far behind?" See the optimistic note.

So, therefore, the greatest poets have been always those who have had a large and powerful interpretive and intuitive vision of Nature and life and the man and whose poetry has arisen out of that in a supreme revelatory utterance of it my dear friend.

You remember what when Wordsworth says child is the father of the man. You see, it is not a simple statement it is not a simple utterance rather it actually talks volumes about how the influences that we have in our childhood continues till long. So, can there be anything better than a vision which Wordsworth has given in a very short poem.

And you will find there are endless poems like this and a good number of poets have been practicing their art where they have been talking about their vision. My dear friends, since we are talking about Indian poetry in English we should also rather try to discuss where are the ancient roots of our literature. Did Indian poetry in English or for that matter even before Indian literature in English. My dear friends, as Aurobindo mentions the Vedic poets regarded their poetry as Mantras.

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The Ancient Roots of Our Literature

"The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as Mantras, they were vehicles of their own realisations and could become vehicles of realisation for others. -Aurobindo

Tamil literature is the oldest

The universe itself is considered the poem of God.


Now, when you talk about the artificial the element of artificiality in poetry, can you also think of Indian literature where our Vedic poets regarded their poetry as mantras, they were the vehicles of their own realization and could have become vehicles of realization for others.

And even today we find the Vedas are one of the greatest lessons that mankind has and not to in India my dear friend, but all over the world or our ancient literature say for example, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Gita and the lines which are there, they are still true, they are still becoming the eye openers not only to a people of one country, but also to the people of other countries my dear friends. Now, when we talk about Indian English literature because we have named this course as Indian poetry in English. Did we really have English even before? No ,my dear friends.

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- Vasco da Gama (1498)
- Portuguese and Dutch
- The East India Company
- Administrative vacuum (created by disintegration of Mughal empire)



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All our English influences came through foreign people specially you know, through Vasco da Gama, Portuguese and Dutch; there were several invasions in our country. If you have been you might have read from the pages of the history and still in India when the East India Company came, this East India Company historically you know actually they had come as merchants, but they became rulers.

And later on ,we could find that in order to have people who could work for them they actually wanted the people of this country to have the knowledge of English. So, the English education which came to India and specially which was given to us by none other than these Britishers. They actually felt the need because they also wanted people who could work for them.

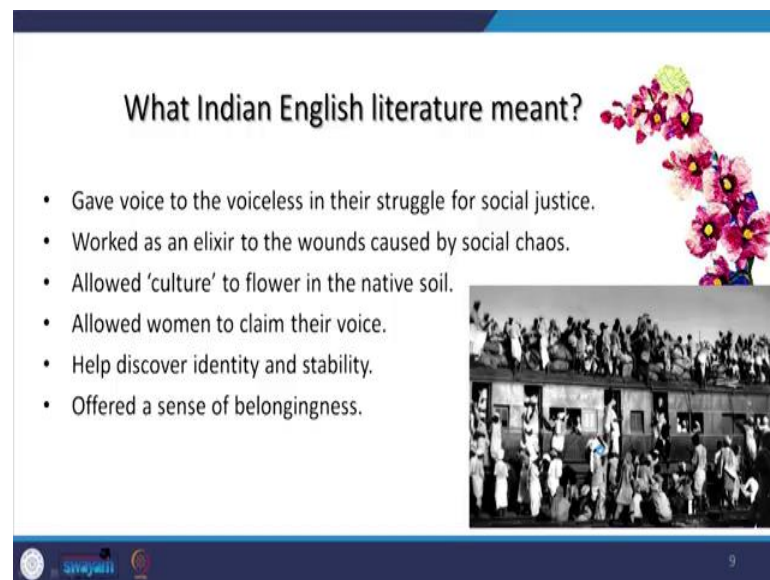
And we will see when we come across Macaulay's Minutes that they wanted a class of people, class of people who could help them govern millions of people. And who should

these people be? These people should actually be Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in morals and in opinions that is what Macaulay says in his Minutes.

And, we find that with this because in the beginning there were several oppositions as to why we should have English, but it was actually the need of the hour and that is why after the disintegration of Mughal empire these Britishers these actually since they wanted to rule over for a longer time and they could rule only because of English.

So, when we find that English came to India through East India Company ,of course, many of the historians and others find that it was actually a shock for many people, but then this shock had its own advantage, my dear friend, we will see later.

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The slide features a title 'What Indian English literature meant?' in bold black text. To the right of the title is a decorative graphic of pink and yellow flowers. Below the title is a bulleted list of six points. To the right of the list is a black and white photograph of a large crowd of people, possibly at a public gathering or protest. At the bottom left of the slide are three small circular logos, and at the bottom right is the number '9'.

What Indian English literature meant?

- Gave voice to the voiceless in their struggle for social justice.
- Worked as an elixir to the wounds caused by social chaos.
- Allowed 'culture' to flower in the native soil.
- Allowed women to claim their voice.
- Help discover identity and stability.
- Offered a sense of belongingness.

Now, why did we need English and what did Indian English literature mean to us? How did it help? Because we are living under the rule of the East India Company and the country was not united and these people wanted to rule over our country with the help of the select group of people who could, to quote the words of Macaulay who could be Indians in blood and color, but English in taste, in morals and in opinion.

So, but then how did it help? This actually gave the voice to the voiceless in the struggle for social justice. You cannot suppress a country or a people for a long time in with the help of only language my dear friend. Of course, language is the great weapon to control, but for that you needed people who could speak your language is not it?.

But, initially Indians who were writing they were writing in their own language, but in order to survive they wanted a language which was alien though, but which was friendly in order to carry out their own objectives. English worked as an elixir to the wounds caused by the social chaos. There was a great division in the society and these people who were considered Babus, fine? They were considered to be an elite class fine among the common people common masses.

But, then with their knowledge of English, sometimes or the other you know since I said you cannot control or you cannot suppress a country for a long time these people also might have realized that it is their own soil, it is their own maati to say because it started in Bengal.

And you know, till that time even Indian women who did not have because our tradition had if some certain good qualities there were some lapses also on and for that we actually needed to have a sort of education that was not only moderate, but that was forward looking.

And in this regard, English did a Yeoman's service my dear friend. It also helped discover a sense of identity and stability; identity and stability, my dear friend and Indians got a sense of belonging with the help of English now they could know because majority of the people started learning English since the schools were also started.

You know when English schools were started and when Hindu College was started in Calcutta one of the directors of the East India Company had said we actually had created a folly and had lost America because of the establishment of schools there.

And we are going to repeat the same folly and my dear friend it has really become true. They started English education and it was only a group of English educated people most of them Britishers who founded some of these schools and colleges and the Hindu College was the first to come into existence and with the Hindu College coming to existence now English education started and it also started creating among Indians a sense and a sort of you know a sort of realization that they can have their own identity my dear friend.

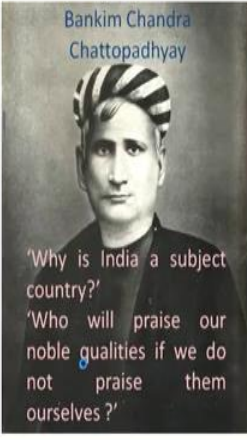
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Repercussions

Colonial poets to follow some unsaid rules

What was remembered of our past?




- Towards discovering its past and its identity.
- Birth of Nationalism
- Collision between Indian religion and colonial Indian education.
- Awareness of indigenous tradition and culture.
e. g. **Michael Madhusudan Dutt** made a shift from English to Bengali



Bankim Chandra
Chattopadhyay

'Why is India a subject
country?'

'Who will praise our
noble qualities if we do
not praise them
ourselves?'




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What were actually the repercussions? And the repercussions was they wanted that their country should be free from the clutches of a foreign rule. And for that if you are a student of history you might realize how several revolutions because English the Britishers came to colonize India, but while colonizing India. They civilized India they civilized India in the sense that they gave Indians a sort of language a weapon of language through which they became more conscious.

And then there was birth of Nationalism there from time to time came to be some collision between Indian religion and the colonial education because many people were against this colonial education. There were some poets even and there were some novelists who while writing they often specially to quote Bankim Chandra who said, Why is India a subject country?

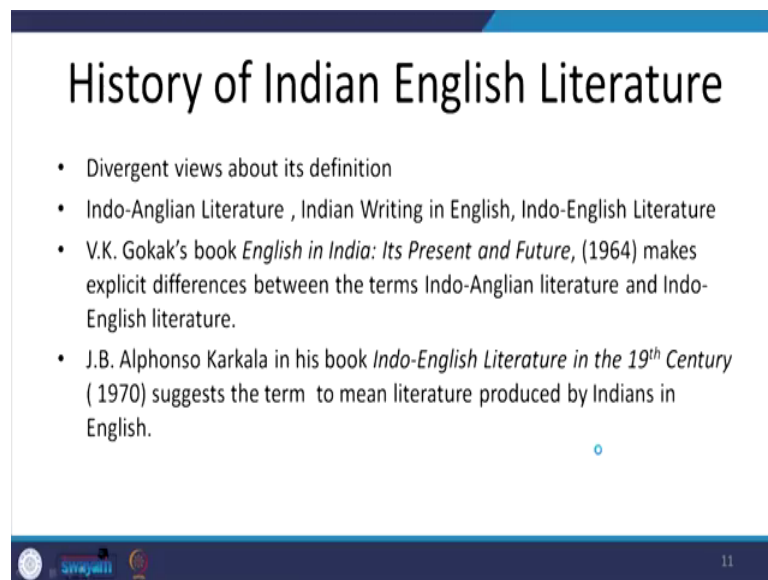
Who will praise our noble qualities if we do not praise them ourselves? And they wanted to praise their own country. So, even when Bankim Chandra wrote his own work even though he was writing in Bengali, but a news, but a new consciousness was created in the minds of people.

And you will find that many Indians they started writing in English. So, in a way something that was actually a sort of imposition that actually become a compulsion and it stirred the minds of millions and they thought they could write, they could write even though with the help of English language they could actually bring the Indian problems

to the masses and to the world my dear friend and this happened. You will realize when we discuss Michael Madhusudan Dutt and others how they started writing in English.

Of course, they initially were writers who were writing in their own mother tongue and not only Michael Madhusudan Dutt, but in other parts of the country many people were writing in their own language, but they realized that the need of the hour was to propagate the Indian problems and in a language that the world could know and that really worked a miracle my dear friend. Now, when we talk about the history of English literature as I said my dear friends in the beginning there were several views about Indian English literature.

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History of Indian English Literature

- Divergent views about its definition
- Indo-Anglian Literature , Indian Writing in English, Indo-English Literature
- V.K. Gokak's book *English in India: Its Present and Future*, (1964) makes explicit differences between the terms Indo-Anglian literature and Indo-English literature.
- J.B. Alphonso Karkala in his book *Indo-English Literature in the 19th Century* (1970) suggests the term to mean literature produced by Indians in English.

Some of them started calling it an Indo-Anglian literature, some started calling it Indian Writing in English and then some started calling Indo-English Literature. Now, all these terms had actually some differences, but in a way all they wanted what they wanted was they actually wanted to say that the literature written by Indians and that also in English.

It was only when V. K. Gokak wrote his first book in the year 1964 it is there that he makes explicit differences between the terms Indo-Anglian literature and Indo-English literature.

While he calls Indo-Anglian literature as literature created by Indians, when he talks about Indo-English literature he talks about the translated literature my dear friend. And

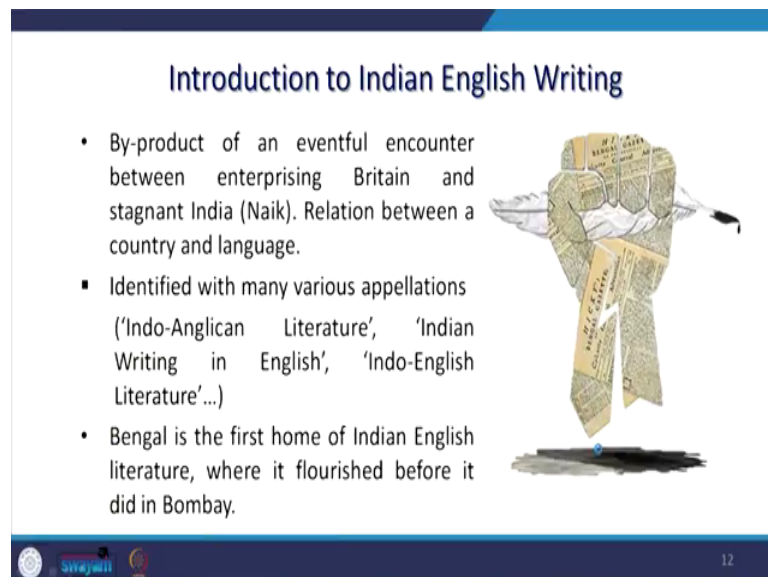
then, in you know because by 1800 these by 1850 these things had already subsided my dear friend and Indians now wanted to write in write their own stories and that also in English, their own poems and that also in English.

J. B. Alphonso Karkala in his book titled Indo-English Literature in the 19th Century suggests the term to mean literature produced by Indians in English. So, after the debate as many people had started calling it by different names some of them felt that when we say Anglo Indian, Indo Anglican there is actually a tinge of English.

But, then we wanted our own literature one of the writers has gone to the extent of saying that when we say Anglo Indian what we mean we are not talking about language, but we are talking about a language and a country. And it was only in 1962 when Srinivas Iyengar wrote a book Indian writing in English.

So, everyone accepted and later on it was also accepted by Sahitya Academy. Indian English literature as a new branch and since then not only have we come a long way, but we have our own literature my dear friend. It was, of course, the byproduct of an eventful encounter as M. K. Naik in his book says.

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Introduction to Indian English Writing

- By-product of an eventful encounter between enterprising Britain and stagnant India (Naik). Relation between a country and language.
- Identified with many various appellations ('Indo-Anglican Literature', 'Indian Writing in English', 'Indo-English Literature'...)
- Bengal is the first home of Indian English literature, where it flourished before it did in Bombay.

The slide features a blue header and footer. The main content is on a white background. To the right of the text is an illustration of a white paper airplane with yellow newspaper clippings attached to its wings and body. The footer contains logos for Swajwal and a small globe icon, along with the number 12.

But, then all these terms with different appellations wanted only one thing wanted the contributions of Indians in English writing. And as I have been mentioning that it was

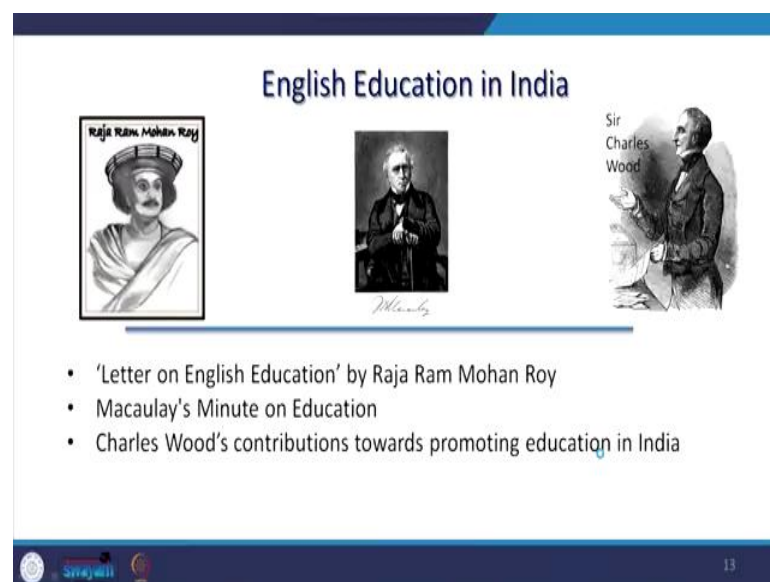
Bengal which was the home of Indian English literature where it flourished before it did in Bombay.

Later on, as you go into the details of Indian English literature and for that matter Indian poetry in English you will find that there came to be several groups Bombay groups, Calcutta groups and then many of the people who are writing in their regional languages they also tried their hands at English.

If we take a look at the political repercussions we will find that when Hindi was being introduced, there were several you know several slogans against it because the Hindi was not being accepted as a link language and that is why later on English also started being used as a language for all purposes and this is how the journey of Indian writing in English began. So, people like Swami Vivekananda; Swami Vivekananda once said that the system of Sanskrit Education can be best calculated to keep India in darkness.

Now, for the first time my dear friends people like Swami Vivekananda and others they also felt the need that English was actually the need of the hour. And it was only through English that India could come a long way and could show its own contribution of course, we have talked about Macaulay's Minutes on education.

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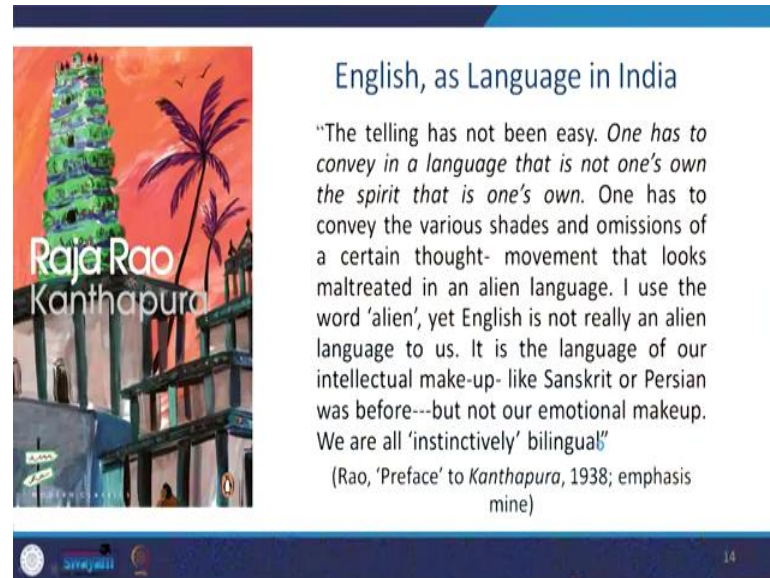
The slide is titled "English Education in India" and features three portraits: Raja Ram Mohan Roy on the left, Thomas Macaulay in the center, and Sir Charles Wood on the right. Below the portraits is a bulleted list of their contributions to English education in India.

- 'Letter on English Education' by Raja Ram Mohan Roy
- Macaulay's Minute on Education
- Charles Wood's contributions towards promoting education in India

And you will really appreciate that there were some Britishers namely William Jones, Halhed and Charles Wood who actually said that a medium of intercourse was necessary

in order to have the administrative facility available to all people and that is how English actually in India got recognized in English education had its own dividends to reap in the days to come my dear friend.

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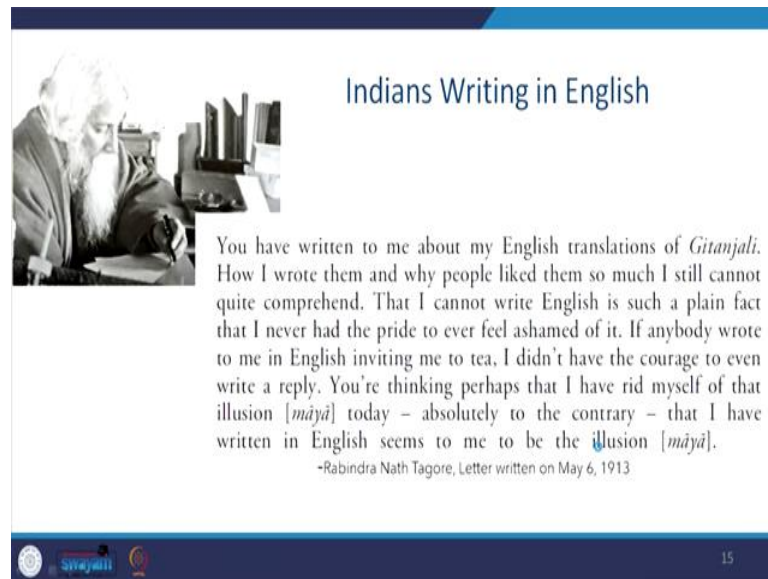
The slide is titled "English, as Language in India". On the left, there is a painting of a traditional Indian temple tower (Gopuram) with a palm tree in the foreground. The text "Raja Rao Kanthapura" is overlaid on the painting. On the right, there is a quote: "The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought- movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up- like Sanskrit or Persian was before---but not our emotional makeup. We are all 'instinctively' bilingual". Below the quote, it says "(Rao, 'Preface' to *Kanthapura*, 1938; emphasis mine)". At the bottom left of the slide, there are logos for "Sri Jayanti" and "Sri Jayanti". At the bottom right, the number "14" is visible.

But, then as we came as we came forward, we found that even many novelists also of course, they realized that English was a sort of imposition here I would like to make a mention of the quote that Raja Rao one of the famous Indian English novelists I mean the forerunners of Indian Novel in English who said the telling has not been easy.

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own and the spirit that is one's own. So, they felt that when you were speaking in a different language or writing in a different language you were not able to create or to show the spirit that was yours own.

One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an in alien language. They actually thought that English language was against the spirit of Indians, but there are many people who later we will come to have a further discussion when we have the 2nd lecture on it. When they also realized that ___ **No**, we should actually write in English.

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Indians Writing in English

You have written to me about my English translations of *Gitanjali*. How I wrote them and why people liked them so much I still cannot quite comprehend. That I cannot write English is such a plain fact that I never had the pride to ever feel ashamed of it. If anybody wrote to me in English inviting me to tea, I didn't have the courage to even write a reply. You're thinking perhaps that I have rid myself of that illusion [*māyā*] today – absolutely to the contrary – that I have written in English seems to me to be the illusion [*māyā*].

-Rabindra Nath Tagore, Letter written on May 6, 1913

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And before I conclude my dear friend let me also take make a mention of how the famous Bengali poet who got Nobel Prize in literature, specially for his work *Gitanjali* how he also felt that English was a sort of imposition and it was a sort of impediment and in one of his letters to his niece he says you have written to me about my English translations of *Gitanjali* because Tagore had translated his own *Gitanjali* into English.

How I wrote them and why people like them so much I still cannot quite comprehend. That I cannot write English is such a plain fact that I never had the pride to ever feel ashamed of it. If nobody wrote to me in English inviting me to tea. I did not have the courage to even write a reply.

You are thinking perhaps that I have rid myself of that illusion today absolutely on the contrary that I have written in English seems to me to be the illusion. So, he could never think that he could write in English, but later on it is said that Tagore was also highly influenced by English.

And one more Indian poetess especially when she wrote because you know gradual change in mentality came and people accepted that they had to write in English if they really had to survive and if they really had to make a mention of their own and they wanted that India should be known elsewhere.

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Gradual Change in Mentality

I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.

*Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.*

It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human

(An Introduction, Kamala Das, 1965: emphasis mine)

So, what she says in one of her poems you can read only I will talk about the lines which I have emphasized:

“I speak three languages, write in two,
dream in one.

Do not write in English they said, English is
not your mother tongue. Why not leave
me alone critics, friends, visiting cousins.
Every one of you why not let me speak in
any language I like. The language I speak
becomes mine.”

. My dear friends, to say that English is only the language of the Britishers here Kamala Das gives a very good retort.

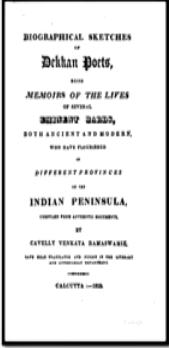
And she says the language I speak becomes mine, its distortions, it queerness all mine, mine alone. It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest it is as human as I am human.

My dear friends, language not only humanizes language civilizes, but a language of one's own actually allows one to express one's own spirit, one's own reactions, one's own feeling and that is how English came to be accepted my dear friend.

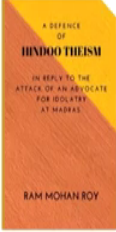
And when we talk about the first writers of English, we will find that even though they had started writing in English much before fine much before even say Henry Derozio who is considered to be the first English poet, but even before that there were many who had started writing autobiographies who had started writing letters.

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Indian English Literature



- Indian English writing started before the various conflicts arising in the education system.
- Autobiographies (first exercise in Indian English literature)
- Low status of regional language in comparison to English.



'Inaugurator of modern age in India' - Tagore

And you know in this regard even in 18th century you know 1794 when one Indian named Dean Mahomed who had written who had published in 1794 a book called the Travels of Dean Mahomed. But, unfortunately later on he got settled in England because he was one of the employees of East India Company and that is why he is not mentioned in many of the books my dear friend.

So, before we come to the conclusion let us also make a mention that those people who had started writing in English they had not been writing in English and they were not accepted because they had translated some of the works in English and that is why we cannot consider them to either to be the first Indian English writer or to be the first Indian English poet my dear friend.

So, before we conclude let us say that language is a weapon and it is in our ability to learn language and we can of course, learn a language and with the help of language we can really make our existence felt elsewhere across the seven seas in other nations, in other countries.

With this I come to the end of lecture and in the 2nd lecture I shall start talking how Indians also started writing in English and we shall come to Indian poetry in English. And I think since Indian English poetry is a vast corpus like Indian English literature, but then a discussion on it is essential because we want to familiarize people with the Indian ways of life, with the Indian ethos, with the Indian strain, with the Indian sensibility my dear friend. So, before we meet for the next talk.

Till then, thank you very much. Have a nice day, bye.