

Indian English Poetry During Freedom Struggle (1857 to 1950)**Dr. Bhagyalaxmi**

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The Dutt Family Album' (1870) is the first notable poetry work of this period. It is the only instance of family anthology in Indian English Poetry. This is a collection of 187 poems by three Dutt brothers. They are Govind Chunder, Hur Chunder and Greece Chunder and their cousin. These poets can hardly with India. They treat their Indian material as something poetically serviceable. Their major subjects are Christian sentiment, nature and Indian history and legend. Ram Sharma (1837 – 1918) wrote occasional verse, satires, narratives, lyrics on various themes and mystical verse. Hindu yogic experience was expressed through conventional western myth and frame.

Toru Dutt (185–77) brought up Indian English Poetry from imitation to authenticity. Torulata was born in a Hindu family but was baptized with family members in 1862. Reading and music were her hobbies. She learnt English in France and England. She sailed for Europe in 1869 and returned to India in 1873. She died at the age of twenty one when her talent was maturing. There are two collections of poems on her name. Out of which one appeared in her own life time. However it was not in the nature of original work. It was 'A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields' (1876) which comprised 165 lyrics by about a hundred French poets. These lyrics are translated by her. To Edmund Gosse, the volume is 'a wonderful mixture of strength and weakness'. Toru Dutt's Keatsian progress during the last two years of her life is revealed in her posthumous publication 'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan' (1882). The themes of these poems indicate that Toru Dutt is the first Indian poet who used Indian myth and legend extensively. Though she was brought up in Christian living or in a half anglicized environment, she gives the treatment of instinctive and spiritual understanding of the legends. Toru Dutt's poetic

technique shows a sure grasp more than poetic mode. Her diction is naturally of the Victorian romantic school. She shows her prosodic skill in using different forms like ballad, blank verse and the sonnet. Unlike Kashiprasad Ghose and M. M. Dutt, Toru Dutt's poetry is virtually free from imitation.

Behram Merwanji Malbari (1853 -1912) wrote 'The Indian Muse in English Garb' (1876). It is a slender collection of 32 pieces. It has occasional verses and poems in social criticism. There were contemporary poets like Cowasji Nowrosi Vesuvala, M. M. Kunte and Nagesh Vishvanath Pai. They belonged to the then Bombay Presidency. But it is said that Bengal was the first home of Indian English literature. Moreover it continued its dominance on the Indian English poetry for many more years. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848 – 1909) wrote in both, Bengali and English. His all English verses are translations. Dutt aimed to produce condensed versions of the great epics. 'Lays of Ancient India' (1894) is a collection of verse translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit classics. To him, he has preserved the 'musical movement of the original in English translations. For which he employed 'Anusthubh/Sloka' meter and reduced the complexity of these Hindu classics. But the use of this 'sloka' meter evaporated the spirit of the original. However, they have been remained as the best introductions in English to our great national epics. Very accurately he has delineated basic human motives and emotions.

Manmohan Ghose (1869 – 1924) was educated in England. He was sent to England at ten. He is a classic example which shows an exile heart, sense of alienation and unhappy childhood and adolescence. Manmohan Ghose published 'Premveera' a collection of verse in 1890, 'Love Songs and Elegies' in 1898 and 'Songs of Love and Death' in 1926. 'Immortal Eve' and 'Mysteries' are his poetic sequels. George Sampson rightly says, 'Manmohan is the most remarkable of Indian poets

who wrote in English.' He is a poet as if trained in classic tradition. Sir Aurobindo (1872 – 1950), Manmohan's younger brother, had also same kind of upbringing. He had passed Civil Service Examination and was a master of many languages like Greek, Latin, French, English, German, Italian, Sanskrit and Bengali. In due course, he became Mahapurusha, a Mahayogi. He founded the centre of yoga at Pondicherry. Sir Aurobindo is well known as a poet and critic of life and letters. His 'Collected Poems and Plays' is the best known. Sir Aurobindo has a parallel record of poetic achievements as a translator and narrative poet, as a metrical and verbal craftsman, as a lyricist and dramatist and as a 'futurist' poet. 'Urvashi' and 'Love and Death' are his beautifully articulated narrative poems. 'Baji Prabhu' is a first rate action poem, 'Percus, the Deliverer' is a blank verse drama. 'Thought the Paraclete' and 'The Rose of God' are the finest mystical poems in the language. His long poems 'Ahana and Ilion' are the best examples of classical quantities' meters. 'Savitri' has created a new kind of epic poetry. He has been aptly called as Milton of India.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was another prominent contemporary poet. Mahatma Gandhi called him as 'The Great Sentinel'. He touched and enriched modern Indian life in many ways. He was poet, dramatist, novelist, short-story writer, composer, painter, thinker, educationist, nationalist and internationalist also. He as a bilingual poet occupied the significant place in Indo – Anglican poetry. 'The Child' and a few other poems are written in English. His 'Geetanjali' (1913), a prose poem, compelled a world – wide attention and he won the Nobel Prize for literature. His prose works too were written originally in English for international public. After 'The Geetanjali', Tagore wrote 'The Gardener' (1913), 'Stray Birds' (1916), 'Lovers Gift and Crossing' (1918) and 'The Fugitive' (1921). W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound were the admirers of Tagore's poetry. Tagore's verse in English had lyrical quality; it had rhythm of free verse. He dealt with simplicity, seriousness and passion. He used colloquial idiom and archaic vocabulary like 'thee' and 'thou'.

Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949) started her career as a poet but later she became a prominent

politician of Gandhian era. She had recognition in England much earlier. Her first volume of poetry, 'The Golden Threshold' (1905) was followed by 'The Bird of Time' (1912) and 'The Broken Wing' (1917). Her collected poems appeared in 'The Sceptred Flute' (1946). A small collection of lyrics written in 1927, 'Father of the Down' was published posthumously in 1961. Her lyrics are strongly influenced by British romanticism and Persian and Urdu poets. In all the four volumes by Sarojini Naidu witness her unerring sense of beauty and melody. Her poems present a feast of delight to the reader. As a lyricist, she always spoke in a 'private voice' and never bothered to express the burning problems of her day. But she is the first rank artist having the strength of perfect rhythm with which she can be close to Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Though she appears hopelessly outdated by the standards of modern poetic taste, she is historically significant and intrinsically important.

Harindranath Chattopadhyay, born in 1898, is also a well-known poet. He has written some brilliant pieces of poetry. Many of his poems are marked a devotional note and his belief in Marxist ideology. He has remained as an idealist and seeker of spiritual truth. He published numerous volumes of verse like 'The Feast of Youth' (1967), 'Virgins and Vineyards' (1967), 'The Magic Tree' (1922), 'Poems and Plays' (1927) and 'Spring in Winter' (1955). Chattopadhyay's better poems have been engulfed in a mass of middling. His themes are the staple of all romantic poetry: nostalgia, melancholy; passion for beauty, the changing moods of love, idealism and humanitarian.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, many poets continued to write in the Romantic and Victorian fashion. The poets like Swami Vivekanand, Harindranath, Meherjee, A. F. Kabardar, N. V. Thadni, Nizam Jung and Anand Acharya exploited Indian or oriental thought and legend. N. W. Pai produced a romance blank verse, 'The Angel of Misfortune' (1905). Anand Acharya rendered his own prose poems like Tagore. But there were some poets who responded the new trend, Georgianism. Robi Dutt, Joseph Furtado, P. Sheshadri, J. Vakil, G. K. Chettur, S. K. Chettur and Kabraji reveal Georgian love of the colloquial idiom and simple handling of poetical themes.

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