

## Chapter I

### INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE : FROM DEROGED TO SRI ANROBENDO

The whole gamut of Indian writing in English falls into two distinct categories : Indo-Anglian Literature and Indo-English Literature. Indo-Anglian Literature comprises the creative work of Indian writers in English language. It ranges from imitative verses to personal essays. Indo-English Literature, on the other hand, consists of translations of Indian literatures into English by Indians. It may otherwise be called 'Literature in Translation'. However, no sharp demarcation can be drawn between Indo-English and Indo-Anglian Literatures in respect of their areas of relevance, for an Indo-Anglian writer may take active interest and achieve success in translating Indian literatures into English. Apart from these two types of writings in English in India, there are some more creative writings in English on Indian themes as well as translations of Indian literatures into English by Englishmen of letters. The Gunga of Kishna by Robert Southey, The Moorstang by W. Collins and The Jungle Book by Kipling or translations like Kalidasa's Shakuntala by William Jones and Patanjali's Yoga Sutra by W.B. Yeats contribute to the mainstream of English literature. But, Indian in theme and spirit, these writings of Englishmen are a

permanent source of interest and curiosity to the Indian readers. Besides, there are some more creative writings by Englishmen like Meadows Taylor and Sir Edwin Arnold who lived in India and wrote on India. These works have their intrinsic value and excellence in as much as they reflect various aspects of Indian social scene of the age they lived in. This literature may be termed as Anglo-Indian literature. But the entire stock and range of such writings in and on India by both Indian and Englishmen of letters may properly be classified into two broad groups : 'Indian writing in English' and 'English Writing in and on India'.

During the past one hundred and sixty years the writers of Indo-Anglian literature have gained in independence and respectability. They have made outstanding achievements in the creative as well as critical fields of literature. They have aroused considerable interest and curiosity among the English-reading public at home and abroad. The works of writers like Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore in the past, and Malk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayana, Kamala Das, Kamala Markandeya, P.Lal, Nissim Ezekiel and Khuswant Singh, to name a few, in our own days have not only attracted a large number of readers, but also earned critical acclaim from critics of the West. The Post-Independence writers, in

particular, have aroused greater awareness among the readers of this literature. The growing interest of the foreign press in publishing works of eminent Indian writers bears testimony to the increase in Indo-English readership. Some western readers take it up as a gateway to India and her cultural heritage, while others go in for Indian writing in English out of curiosity on the creative use of English language by Indians. Indian readers, on the other hand, approach Indo-English literature with a degree of cultural understanding and feel a participation in the milieu portrayed, and at the same time they are fascinated by the expansiveness of the consciousness of its writers. Above all, Indo-English literature has brought the West closer to the East in a unique way.

Indo-English literature is, on the one hand, a distinct Indian literature like Bengali literature or Assamese literature and, on the other, a variation of English literature like American literature or Australian literature. Indo-English literature is not essentially different in kind from other Indian literatures, for it holds the mirror upto the composite culture and heritage of India. It portrays the existential dilemmas, the problem of rootlessness, colour bar, caste bar, untouchability, etc. It presents the life of a 'Kanthapura'

er a 'Malgudi' or of a coolie in a tea-garden, but does not fail to sweep through continents and eternity; and so long as the operative sensibility of the writer is essentially Indian, it must be considered as an Indian literature. Moreover, English is one of the national languages of free India and it has struck its roots deep in all spheres of national interest and activity. Yet, inspite of its Indianness in theme, consciousness and sensibility, Indo-  
-Anglian literature in its language, technique and style is an off-spring of English literature. There is no denying the fact that it has profitably enriched English literature by contributing to its range and variety.

The introduction of English education in India is, by and large, responsible for the emergence of Indo-Anglian literature. It stirred the traditional concept of education to its very depths and brought about a tremendous change in the attitude to life. The youngmen with the College and University education were caught with a sort of 'Anglo-mania'. The craze for learning English was so strong that many acquired mastery of the language. The result was far-reaching, for English served to them as a gateway to the store-house of knowledge of the West. It gave rise to an unprecedented awakening in India similar to the Renaissance of the fourteenth Century Europe. The intellectuals of the nineteenth Century

India felt an urge to recreate the cultural life that existed in the West. It was out of this urge that Indo-English literature was born. Moreover, these men were caught up with the idea that the British rule had come to stay permanently and the language of the rulers must be studied well for communication as well as self-expression.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century Christian Missionaries opened a large number of English-medium schools and Colleges like Oriental College, Rampur (1774), Calcutta Madrasa, Calcutta (1781), Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta (1784), Sanskrit College, Benares (1792), and Oriental Research Institute, Mysore (1801) to educate the so-called illiterate masses of India. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the East India Company was, more or less, the master of the situation in India. In 1813 the commercial monopoly of the Company came to an end and the British administration took up educative and civilizing functions in addition to administrative ones. In 1817 Hindu College was established at Calcutta by the joint endeavour of Raja Ramohan Roy and his two friends, David Hare and Sir Edward Hyde East. The new wave of English education created a sharp reaction among the advocates of traditional system of

education. These 'orientalists', however, lost ground to 'Anglicists' who strongly pleaded for the western system of education in India with English as the medium of instruction. Raja Ramohan Roy championed the cause of English education and denounced 'Sanskrit system' of education as the best calculated measure to keep this country in darkness. Macaulay's famous 'Minute on Education' was a significant approach to the systematic introduction of English education in India. He observed that of all foreign tongues, the English tongue was the most useful to the native subjects in India. In pursuance of the spirit of recommendations of Lord Macaulay, Lord William Bentinck proposed :

"The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and sciences among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated for the purpose of education, would be best employed on English education alone."<sup>1</sup>

Since then English became not only the official language of India, but also the medium of instruction in schools and colleges in India. Very soon three Universities sprang up in three Presidency towns of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta with English as the medium of instruction. The establishment of

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1. K.R.S. Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, 6th ed. rev. (1962; New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1967), p.27.

Universities generated a new life and opened new vistas of knowledge for the native scholars. The dormant intellectual and oriental impulses were quickened into a new awareness, a sense of urgency and practicality in thought and action. This new force coincided with the thought-currents of the Romantic Movement in the West and infused a new spirit of quest for knowledge. For the first time the middle class intelligentsia began to question the orthodox prejudices, dogmas and superstitions that had gripped them for centuries. This unprecedented awakening also gave rise to intense nationalism in them and they struggled to express their passionate thoughts and feelings through the English language. Some, caught up in the regional patriotism, revived the local vernaculars, while others began to study and use the English language with greater enthusiasm for self-expression. No doubt, it is out of this Anglo-mania that Indo-English literature was born and yet it cannot be gainsaid that these people have rendered valuable service to Indian culture by giving a poetic embodiment to the traditional ethos and culture of India in a language of the western world.

Raja Ramohan Roy's contribution to the Indian life and culture as well as to Indo-English literature is precisely as a spokesman of the harmonious interaction of Indian and

European cultures. A great scholar and a linguist, Ramchen was a fervent Indian patriot. He felt sick at the appalling backwardness of the Indian people in cherishing religious dogmas and superstitions like the practice of widow-burning. He rejected the senseless orthodox dogmas and advocated the worship of one god, which was to be perfected by the selfless service to the humanity. His views in this regard were published in The Precepts of Jesus, An Appeal to the Christian Public, Second Appeal and Final Appeal. He was the first Indian to write English prose with confidence and the first writer in the field of Indo-English literature. Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar, however, casually refers to the Cavally brothers as the first Indian writers of English Prose and Verse. He refers to the Annals of Oriental Research of the University of Madras (XVIII, II, 1963) in which N.Venkata Rao hails Cavally Venkata Bhasha (1776-1803) as 'the first English Prose writer of eminence' and his brother Cavally Venkata Ramaswamy as 'the first among the Indian writers of English verse.'<sup>2</sup> Most of the writings of Ramchen Roy are, of course, in the service of religious eclecticism and liberal social policies. In his Prose we come across the subtle mind of a social rebel using his 'Wlanguage a surgeon's knife to open up blisters of ignorance with delicate care, heying for no reward for his

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2. Iyengar, op.cit., p.33.

labour other than urgently needed social reforms".<sup>3</sup> He uses the English language to the best of his advantage in this respect. He is the master of a lucid Prose style of considerable flexibility and elegance. When the occasion demands, he rises to Miltonic majesty in his vindication of liberty of thought and expression. His open letters to the British rulers and learned circles speak of his mastery of the lofty and elegant Prose style in English language.

Like Raja Ramohan Roy, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio is to be honoured as the first Indo-Anglian Poet of sustained excellence. Born of Portuguese father and Indian mother, Henry Derozio was a 'Christian Byron' :

"Christianity, Romanticism, the French Revolution, Byronism-- all coalesced in the Poetry of a Eurasian Clerk, teacher and journalist of Calcutta, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), the first Indo-Anglian Poet".<sup>4</sup>

Like Ramohan Roy, he was a rebel against Hindu nursery, superstition and backwardness. While teaching in the Hindu College, he would sow seeds of revolutionary ideals on the

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3. J.B. Alphonso Karshale, Indo-English Literature in the Nineteenth Century (Mysore : University of Mysore, 1970), p.18.

4. H.N. Williams, Indo-Anglian Literature : A SURVEY (New Delhi : Orient Longman, 1970), p.15.

fertile soil of the young minds. He had a strong bias for the Western culture but was at heart a true Indian. He had a genuine interest in Indian lore, local customs and legends. He was a Patriot-Poet of India during the days of her Renaissance. His sonnets and lyrics like The Harp of India, In India and My Native Land are the passionate outbursts of his love for motherland as well as his disgust with her enslaved condition. These sonnets and lyrics show his remarkable command of language and expression. His famous Poem, The Fakir of Junagheer, a metrical tale, is the first important milestone in the development of Indo-Anglian Poetry. The most distinctive characteristic of Derogio's Poetry is romanticism, because he completely submitted himself to the English romantic influences. He draws his poetic personality from Byron and Wordsworth and is extremely derivative in respect of theme and imagery. He is a typical early nineteenth Century Indo-Anglian Poet in his romanticism, derivativeness and choice of Indian themes. The influence of Derogio, who died prematurely at the age of twentyone, did much for the growth and development of Indo-Anglian verse in the later years.

Henry Derogio was followed by Kashi Prasad Ghose who had so much love for English metrical composition that he acquired a thorough knowledge of English Prosody and Versification. An

eminent Deronian in derivativeness and choice of theme, Kashi Prasad Ghosh is the first Bengali Poet to have published a collection of English Poems entitled The Shair and Other Poems in 1836. He is also the first Indo-Anglian Poet to have caused a stir in the English literary world and make them aware of the existence of the Indo-Anglian school of Poetry. He is also the first Indo-Anglian Poet to have earned critical acclaim from the foreign press. His The Farewell Song resembles the sonnets and lyrics of Deronio, while his Shair seems to have been modelled after Sir Walter Scott's minstrel of The Lady of the Lost Minstrel. A good deal of Poetic feeling may be discerned in the Poem and it is particularly remarkable for its richness of imagery and elegance of language.

The nineteenth century renaissance in India produced a few practisem of Indo-Anglian verse after 1835. Among them the names of Mohan Lal, Hassam Ali and Raja Gopal are mentioned, but they have neither historical relevance nor Poetic value. In 1839, Gogree Churn Dutt published his School Hours, while Raj Narayan Dutt came out with his O Singar and Ganga, an Arabian tale in 1841. These Poems, however, donot mark any advancement in the field of Indo-Anglian verse-writing.

Among the pioneers of Indo-Anglian Poetry, Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt is the most powerful. He is a far more gifted poet than Derogio and Kashi Prasad. Like Derogio, he had the ambition of becoming an English Poet and started his career as a writer of verse in English. But when his poems failed to fulfil his expectations, he switched over to Bengali, his mother tongue, and his poetic genius is best revealed in that field. Yet, his contribution to Indo-Anglian Poetry is no less remarkable from the point of view of quality and quantity. While at the Hindu College, he wrote a few poems in English, some of which are fine sonnets, such as Sonnet, written at the Hindu College. Later, he wrote a long poem, King Rama -- A Legend of Old. But the most famous of his works is The Captive Ladie, narrating the heroic exploits of Prithviraj, closely imitating the style of Byron and Scott. This was followed by Visions of the Past in blank verse. He also wrote a poetic drama, Raja -- Success of Indu in the style of Shakespeare, using both blank verse and prose. Madhusudan had a wide-ranging knowledge of the European and Indian cultures and in his poetry he attempted to unite the two. His poetry, however, suffers from unassailable scholarship as well as lack of originality. The verse technique is entirely Miltonic in the use of heavily Latinized diction, epic simile, high-serious mood and imagery.

Sheshee Chunder Dutt, a minor contemporary poet, asserted his Christianity against Hinduism in his Poem, A Vision of Swarg. Grace Chunder Dutt, another Bengali Poet, gave expression to his Christian allegiance in his sonnets, Cherry Blossoms. These poems, however, did not mark any advancement upon what already had existed. Behramji Malabari, a Parsee by birth, was a journalist-Poet who attempted to establish harmony between India and England through his verses. His verse-autobiography, The Indian Muse in English Garb contains some lively passages, but for an Indian reader he takes his admiration for England and Indian backwardness too far. Nagesh Wishwanath Pai, a lawyer-Poet, wrote The Angel of Misfortune, a narrative poem in blank verse. The Poem belongs to the world of Indo-Anglian romanticism, for the subject-matter is drawn from the heroic past.

The imitative and derivative nature of Indo-Anglian Poetry in the hands of these poets gradually ceased to exist as a dominant feature and the beginning of the third quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable change in attitude of the Poets. In their hands Indo-Anglian Poetry became assimilative and adoptive, and yet fresh and inventive. Their works display greater maturity in the choice of theme and craftsmanship in handling popular forms of poetry. Among

the poets of this second generation, Toru Dutt occupies a respectable position and is always remembered as the Pioneer-builder of the tradition of Indo-Anglian Poetry. She rendered the most singular service of putting Indo-Anglian poetry on the international literary map. Her powerful poetic genius that lifted the early imitative and derivative Indo-Anglian Poetry to the plane of originality and inventiveness for the first time drew rousing critical acclaim from the West. She was also the first of her sex to interpret the spirit of India to the Western world through her poems. Born of Govin Chunder Dutt, a distinguished linguist and a cultured man with literary leanings, and Kshetramoni, a lady of sweet temperament and well-versed in Indian myths and legends, Toru was an extra-ordinarily gifted girl devoted to the cause of Poetry and literature. In her tragically brief span of twentyone years, as in the case of Dorothea, she created a body of poetry which, though small in bulk, 'the posterity will not willingly let die'. She was well-versed in English, French and Sanskrit. French Poetry had fascinated her so much that she rendered a large number of French Poems into English under the title, A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields. Eight such poems by her elder sister Aru Dutt were included in the volume. The best of her works is Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan in which she

glorifies India's cultural heritage. The entire work is marked by lyricism and fire. There is an arresting sweep in her lines and a melody in her verse. Her poetic diction is simple and clear. She also wrote a novel in French, Le journal de Mlle. D'Arvass, which was no less acclaimed than her translations. Her unfinished English novel, Rianza or The Young Spanish Maiden Rianza, appeared in Bengal Magazine in January-April, 1878. She could not produce much because death and disease snatched her away before she could give her full poetic performance. Nevertheless, her poetic achievement is great and miraculous. In his "Introductory Memoir" to her Posthumous Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan Edmund Gosse wrote :

"It is difficult to exaggerate when we try to estimate what we have lost in the premature death of Toru Dutt. Literature has no honours which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl, who at the age of twentyone and in languages separated from her by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth.... when the history of literature of our country comes to be written, there is sure to be a page dedicated to this fragile, exotic blossom of songs."<sup>5</sup>

Like Kanta, at this young age of twentyone, she attained considerable poetic maturity and individuality, which is a landmark in the history of Indo-English Poetry. Even in her

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5. P.C.Kotoky, Indo-English Poetry (Ganhati University, 1969), p.27.

translation, ~~A Sheaf~~ her attainment is simply astounding. She proved that translation is not an isolated phenomenon, but an index of personality meaningful in its relevance to the literary and cultural heritage. In fact, she raised the status of translation in the field of literature. Her Ballads, on the other hand, is the most valuable contribution to Indo-Anglian Poetry, because the poems included in the volume not only present thematic novelty, but also re-create and interpret ancient Indian ethos and culture in the English language. Prof. V.N. Khushn observes :

"Most of the Poems deal with themes of Indian mythology, while a few are concerned with her personal moods and feelings. The stories from the Hindu epics and legends which Toru heard in her childhood from her mother-- made a deep impress upon her mind. It is this legendary lore that she interprets in her longer poems. These poems also reveal her metrical skill in blank verse. The few personal poems are written as sonnets - and exhibit her sensitiveness to Nature, her tender sentiment and strength and greatness of intellect".<sup>6</sup>

About her poetic achievement P.C. Kotoky remarks :

"As an Indian writer of English verse, Toru Dutt's main achievement lies in her effective mastery of the medium. She shows in her poetry a fine sense of the English language, a feeling for its rhythm and diction, and her handling of the traditional verse form was seldom at fault."<sup>7</sup>

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6. V.N. Khushn, The Panchak Laksh (Bombay : Padma Publications, 1945), p.42.

7. Kotoky, SRG, p.18.

No doubt, Toru was a genuine poet of considerable merit and here was the first original, mature and meaningful contribution to the Indo-Anglian genre. Padmini Sengupta rightly observes :

"There is hardly another English writer in India who is so regularly remembered in the journals and newspapers of the country. In India's Who's Who she is marked among the great. Neither are her biographers in Bengali, French and English scarce. She has passed the test of time and, though born over more than a hundred years ago, is still very much alive proving herself a classic writer."<sup>8</sup>

Mr. H.A.L. Fisher is so much impressed by her poetic genius that he does not hesitate to saying :

"....this child of the green valley of the Ganges has by sheer force of native genius earned for herself the right to be enrolled in the great fellowship of English Poets".<sup>9</sup>

Another talented poet of Bengal who contributed substantially to Indo-Anglian Poetry at the end of the nineteenth Century is Mamohan Ghose the elder brother of Sri Aurobindo. About him Laurence Binyon in his "Introduction" to Mamohan's Songs of Love and Death said that no Indian poet had ever before used their tongue with so poetic a touch.<sup>10</sup> At a very

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8. Padmini Sengupta Taru Dutt (New Delhi : Sahitya Academy, 1968), p.8.

9. Iyengar, SRG, p. 73.

10. Lotika Ghosh Mamohan Ghose (New Delhi : Sahitya Academy, 1973), p.41.

tender age he was taken by his father, a civil surgeon, to England for his education. To complete his education he moved from Manchester to Oxford and acquired complete mastery of the English language. He started his poetical career with lyric poetry at the age of seventeen and remained a lyric poet par excellence till the end of his life. Throughout his life he was pressed by the burden of sorrow and the feelings of alienation and frustration. Yet, all this could not suppress the fire of his genius; rather he assiduously wooed the Muse and burst into lyrics of tremendous power and fervour. Like Kashi Prasad Ghosh, he had the ambition to find a place among the English poets. In fact, he was a man of true poetic spirit and genius, and an ardent admirer of Greek and English literatures. While at Christ Church, he along with a few of his College-mates, including his life-long friend Laurence Binyon, produced a book of Poems called Pringveng which was highly acclaimed by Addington Symonds and Oscar Wilde. Writing in Ball Hall Gazette, the latter called Marmohan a "young Indian of brilliant scholarship and high literary attainment who gives some culture to Christ Church".<sup>11</sup> The only collection of poems, Love Songs and Elegies, published in his life-time, was

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11. R.P.N.Sinha, Indo-English Poetry (New Delhi : Reliance Publishing House, 1987), p.134.

equally greeted by lovers of Poetry at Calcutta. A few of his poems were published in the Presidency College Magazine and The Calcutta Review. H.R.James, the Principal of Presidency College wrote to the Poet :

"... today I came across a poem of yours in the new -- and glorified -- Calcutta Review, which at all events assures me that the power of writing beautiful poetry continues undiminished. The Poem, The Rider of the White Horse goes straight home to me and I thank you for it. It is sad poem but the beauty transcends and conquers the sadness. You show all your old -- I would even say -- a new mastery of rhymed meter and a mastery of words as perfect as ever."<sup>12</sup>

His Love Songs and Elegies, which consisted of beautiful lyrics on a wide variety of themes like love, death and nature, was published in 1898. Next year was published an anthology, The Garland, which contained three of his poems. His Songs of Life and Death was published posthumously in 1926 and won high critical acclaim from distinguished English celebrities and reviewers like W.B.Yeats and Walter De La Mare. John Freeman who reviewed the book in London Mercury, April, 1926, found Manmohan Ghose an English Poet who should be included in their anthologies. Yeats greeted this volume as "one of the most lovely works in the world",<sup>13</sup> Fascinated by the

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12. Letika Ghose, SR.Git., p.62.

13. Iyengar, SR.Git., p.86.

richness of Greek art and literature he took up an ambitious plan of writing an epic in blank verse on 'Perseus' of Greek mythology. He completed only six Books and left behind fragments of the rest. His lyrical epic, Adam Alarmed in Paradise had also the same fate of remaining incomplete. In his poetry Mammohan is more Western than Eastern and he reflects the sensibility of an English Poet rather than that of an Indian. He had to face much criticism in his own day for being <sup>P</sup>ro-English in his choice and treatment of themes. His only work, Hollo and Demavanti, a long lyrical drama, which also remained unfinished, is based on an Indian theme to identify him as an Indian Poet writing in English on India. Prof. Anamath Jha remarks that Mammohan's Poems "give no indication of any Characteristic, any imagery, any sentiments that can be said to be peculiarly Indian".<sup>14</sup> His letters to his friends, particularly to Binyon, however, reveal that while in England, he had nostalgic urge for India and while in India, he had a ~~such~~ similar longing for England. Leaving this aspect to his critics for debate, it is to be agreed that presence or absence of Indianness in his themes of Poetry should by no means be the yardstick to judge the poetical performance of Mammohan Ghose. He was a remarkable poet by any standard and the credit

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14. Ibid., p.89.

of stabilizing Indo-English Poetry after Toru Dutt undoubtedly goes to him. Dr. P.C. Kotoky observes :

"It was he who first gave Indo-English Poetry a European bias. His Poetry, unlike many other Indo-English Poets, has no superficial emotional exuberance. As a poet Manuohan has grace and restraint, and shows a genuine poetic quest and a fine and cultivated feeling for poetic values."<sup>15</sup>

Truly did Binyon say that

"No Indian had ever before used our tongue with so poetic a touch, and he would coin a phrase, turn a noun into a verb with the freedom, often the felicity, of our own poets."<sup>16</sup>

He added further :

"Yet after all, he was Indian in nature. His verse follows the forms and traditions of English poetry, but his temperament and attitude were Eastern."<sup>17</sup>

Another critic says :

"His short, clear-cut lines, his pappy phrases and finely set images appear effortless. His stanzas glide smoothly, conveying their melancholy directly to the reader's heart."<sup>18</sup>

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15. Kotoky, op.cit., p.33.

16. R.P.N.Sinha, op.cit., p.137.

17. Ibid., p.137.

18. J.B.Karakala, op.cit., p.65.

In short, Mammohan's lyric genius and superb craftsmanship greatly enriched Indo-English Poetry in the early years of the present century.

Another Bengali Poet of eminence who contributed substantially to the common pool of Indian writing in English is Ramesh Chunder Dutt. Ramesh Chunder, the cousin of Toru Dutt, was a man with consuming passion for literature. A member of the Indian Civil Service, Ramesh Chunder Dutt wrote in both English and Bengali. Being inspired by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, he wrote a few historical novels of which Todar Mull, Sivaji and Pratap Singh were translated into English by his son Ajoy Dutt. He himself translated The Slave Girl of Agra and The Lake of Palms. The former takes us to the Mughal times and the latter gives a picture of the Bengali life in the nineteenth century. His A History of Civilisation in Ancient India, Later Hindu Civilisation, India in the Victorian Age, The Economic History of British India, and A Brief History of Ancient and Modern Bengal speak of his vast scholarship and constructive patriotism in the form of historical surveys. More creditable were his English translations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, selections from Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Buddhist literature, Kalidasa's Kumar Sambhava and Bhervi's Kirtarjuniya. His greatest claim to fame as an Indo-English,

rather than Indo-English, rests on his beautiful translations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in Tennyson's Longfellow Hall meter. However, the period of adolescence being over with Toru, Indo-English literature attained its youth, full of vigour and vitality, in the hands of these two mature, powerful and confident writers on wide-ranging themes in English language.

Rabindranath Tagore, the myriad-minded genius of Bengal, needs no introduction to the literary world. A poet, a dramatist, a novelist, a short-story writer, an essayist, a critic, an actor, a patriot, an educationist and a philosopher, Rabindranath is a rare phenomenon of the literary Renaissance in Bengal. During the long eighty-year life-span he left no genre of literature unattempted. His unrivalled poetic achievement in Bengali language has naturally overshadowed his image as an Indo-English poet. He wrote primarily in Bengali and brought Bengali literature to the world scene; and yet he is not a poet of Bengal alone, not even of India, but of the whole world because of his transcendental character. He translated, rather transcribed, many of his poems and plays into English. His translations are no less fresh than the original ones, for the translation done by a poet of his own original work is as good as original containing the original flavour and spirit. Some of his poems, plays and novels were also translated by others

under his supervision. In any case, his works like Gitanjali, The Gardener, The Fugitive, Chitra, The Post Office and Sacrifice are as fresh and original as English Poetry and drama. His other writings in English include 'The Crescent Moon, Fruit Gathering, Lover's Gift, Crossing, The Circle of Spring, Red Oleanders, Star Bird, The Home and the World, The March, Sara, Hungry Stones, Mashi and Broken Ties. There are philosophical writings like Anthems, Personality, Creative Unity and The Realization of Man and an autobiography Amnigence. His lyric moods, his romantic imagery, his passionate love of nature, his broad humanity, his romantic longing, his sense of awe and wonder at the Creation and his mystic yearning for the tryst with the Divine -- all these make his poetry a genuine perennial source of joy and affirmation of love and life. He is the first Asian to be awarded Nobel Prize for literature for his famous work Gitanjali (Song Offerings), a volume of one hundred and three lyrics, which were originally written in Bengali, his mother tongue, and later translated, rather transcribed, in English. These songs are the fruit of the poet's meditations on God, Man and Nature against the beautiful natural background of Santiniketan in West Bengal. These songs are not to <sup>be</sup> intellectually understood, but to be heard and felt within; inwardness is stirred by them in the process to sense the touch of someone from afar. The English volume of

Gitanjali was an instant success drawing overwhelming acclaim from Poets like W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound and many other European writers and critics. The Gitanjali published by Messrs. Macmillan & Co., London in 1912 carries with it the memorable "Introduction" of W.B. Yeats :

"I have carried the manuscript of these translations with me, for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the omnibuses and in restaurants and I have often had to close it lest some stranger should see how much it moved me. These lyrics ... display in their thought a world I have dreamt of all my life long .... As the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every moment the heart of this poet flows onward to those without derogation or condescension, for it has known that will understand; and it has filled itself with the circumstances of their lives." 19

In Gitanjali Rabindranath presented a panorama of Indian life and culture to the Western world. The imagery, the conceits, the basic experience, the longing, the trial, the promise, the realisation -- all these have the unique Indian flavour and taste. However, he gave Indo-English Poetry a new form -- 'Prose-Riem' -- a powerful manipulation of a free verse form and poetic prose, which is a rare technical achievement comparable to that of Walt Whitman or T.S. Eliot. Like Whitman,

Rabindranath created poetry in almost the same form as prose, showing thereby that poetry is not bound by any formal pattern. In this respect Prof. V.K.Gokak observes :

"Tagore's Gitanjali, like his Stray Birds, popularised another form in Indo-English poetry -- the prose-poem. A prose-poem is not merely a purple-patch of poetic prose. It has its own pattern of repetitive devices, parallelisms and contrasts. Though the prose-poem was purely the product of an historical accident -- the translation of Bengali devotional lyrics into 'Prose-Poems' since Tagore did not apparently think that he could give effective metrical renderings -- it has come to stay in Indo-English writing and has been widely cultivated."<sup>20</sup>

Above all, Tagore was a poet of amazing capability, who enriched not only Bengali literature, but also Indo-English literature in a significant way. He exploited the poetic possibilities of English language and, though not always consciously, demonstrated that English language could be a suitable vehicle of Indian sentiment, thought and imagery. The Child, the first and the last of his original poems in English, displays his mastery of the language and skilful use of imagery and conceits. Thus, Rabindranath's occasional sojourn in the field of English language has made a lasting

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20. V.K.Gokak, ed., The Golden Treasury of Indo-English Poetry (New Delhi : Samitya Academy, 1970), p. xxvii.

and valuable contribution towards the maturity and fulfilment of Indo-Anglian Poetry.

Aurobindo Ghosh, popularly known as Rishi Aurobindo or Sri Aurobindo, the great sage of Pondicherry Ashram, was a man of versatile genius and an intellectual giant. He was a Yogi, a patriot, a philosopher and a distinguished man of letters. The main preoccupations of his life were literature, Yoga and Politics, but literature with him was the most absorbing one. As a result, the ceaseless flow of his pen produced a rich harvest of poems, literary and philosophical essays and poetic dramas, which made him a Colossus of Indo-Anglian literature. An extra-ordinary linguist, Sri Aurobindo had mastery of German, Latin, French, Greek, Italian, Sanskrit and Bengali. Like his elder brother Manmohan Ghose, he preferred English as the principal medium of his creative expressions. The most outstanding of his English works are : Songs to Myrtilla and Other Poems, Urvashi, Vikramorvasia, Almas and Other Poems, The Ideal of Karmayogin, The Ideal of Human Unity, Love and Death, Radi Prothom, Essays on the Gita, The Method, The Century of Life, The Riddle of This World, Essays of Yoga, The Life Divine (Vol.1 in 1939 and Vol.2 in 1940), Collected Poems and Plays (2 vols.), Man to the Mystic King, The Human Cycle, Savitri (Part I

in 1950 and Part II in 1951), The Foundations of Indian Culture, Synthesis of Yoga, Sanca of Vidyaneti, Iliad (unfinished), Yasavitta, Parsons the Palivaras, Madama, The Visions of Ravana and King.

Sri Aurobindo's literary output represents the creative effort of about sixty years and it is the saga of fruition and fulfilment that Indo-English poetry can boast of. With him Indo-English Poetry becomes perfectly mature and sublime and something more than lyrical outpourings of love and nature. His Savitri is a rare specimen of the harmonious fusion of poetry and philosophy. His powerful imagination, his command of language and his skilful handling of the traditional English metrical forms make him an outstanding poet. He is also a great master of English prose. His 'Life Divine'

"the best of his long prose works, is a great achievement and should be gladly admitted into English literature as one of the most impressive works of religious visionary writing."<sup>21</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's contribution to Indo-English literature does not end here. His five full-length dramas in blank verse are the products of his romantic imagination

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21. H.M. Williams, op.cit., pp.30-31.

pregnant with philosophical message. His Muse and message coalesce in the impressive body of his writings, whether planned or incidental, that entitle him to the great fellowship of the immortals of literature. His contribution to India's culture and heritage is unparalleled and the massive body of his writings is a perennial source of knowledge and inspiration to the young and the old alike. Considering his outstanding achievement in the field of Indo-English Poetry, S.K.Ghose remarks that he is "not only a great poet, but the Poets' Poet."<sup>22</sup>

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22. S.K.Ghose, Sri Aurobindo : Poet and Social Thinker (Dharwar : Karnataka University, 1973), p.18.