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## The Impact of Imperialism on Novel Genre in Indian Writing in English



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## ABSTRACT

Despite the British government's motivations for introducing modern education to India, this move completely transformed India's social structure. The Indians enlightened by modern education, reacted with the typical vivacity and adoration. Poets like Derozio and Toru Dutt imitated while also displaying some originality. Social and political prose flooded the arena with reformist and nationalistic agendas in prose writing. The novelistic genres, on the other hand, revealed the most important aspects of modern English education. The novel, which was new to the Indian literary scene at the time, quickly gained popularity among the educated Indians of the time. Novels of the time expressed a variety of social, political, and national themes. Novelists like M. R. Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao played a key role in this regard. Overall, the introduction of English education in India ushered in a new entrant into Indian literature: Indian English literature, which made its mark in the most imposing manner possible. This paper highlights the imperialism influence particularly on the genre of novel.

**Key Words: Imperialism, Colonialism, Genre, Novel**

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## Introduction

Indian civilization gives great value to knowledge. India's knowledge tradition is very ancient. The large number of intellectual texts are written by the great scholars. The literary tradition of India is influenced by the Vedic literature. It is relied on narrative or "Katha" in different form and levels. Though the story-telling tradition is very ancient in India, the emergence of the "novel" form owes much to the Western contact. Kapil Kapoor has rightly mentioned in his paper entitled, "Theory of the Novel: An Indian View",



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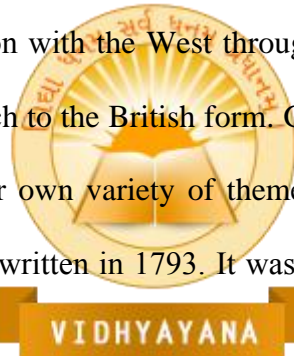
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'Novel' came to be written in India only in the middle of the nineteenth century under the impact of English education and reading, and represented the urban, middle-class, educated India's creativity. The new form was not easy in developing and as Meenakshi Mukherji has described so clearly and precisely, 'the Indian novelist has had to overcome several constraints of tradition and culture in the process of shaping the Indian novel in Indian languages.' (Qtd. in Kapoor, Kapil 89)

### Influence of Imperialism on Novel

The narrative fiction has been a part of Indian literature since long but the emergence of the novel form occurred during India's confrontation with the West through colonization. Though the Indian writers had their own style of writing it owes much to the British form. Gradually, Indian writing in English created a space for themselves dealing with their own variety of themes. The first book written by an Indian in English was 'Travels of Dean Mahomet' written in 1793. It was influenced by the Western art form of the novel.



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The development of Indian Writing in English can be divided into three phases: 1) Prose, 2) Poetry & 3) Fiction. In the first phase, the prose was the leading genre. The various forms such as letters, essays and translations have been published during this mid-nineteenth century phase. According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first Indian master of prose writing. He wrote on the various subjects such as upliftment of women, freedom of press, English education, social justice and plight of Indian peasantry. He had a very good command over English language. The literary and social revolution happened during this time and it paved the way to the renaissance in India. Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, Kesub Chander Sen, Dayanand Saraswati are some of the important prose writers.



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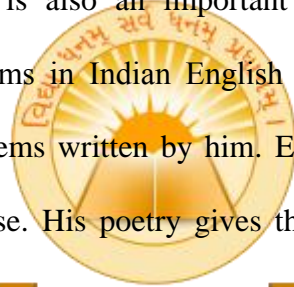
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The Second phase was the rise of Indian poetry in English with poets like Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Toru Dutt. Henry Derozio (1809-1831) is the first recognized Indian English poet. He was a teacher of English literature at the Hindu College, Calcutta. He was highly influenced by the Romantic poets Byron, Keats and Shelley. The flavour of romanticism is felt in almost all of his poems. He died just at the age of 31 due to Cholera. His brilliant lectures presented closely-reasoned arguments based on his wide reading. He encouraged students to read Thomas Paine's "Rights of Man" and other free-thinking texts. Although Derozio himself was an atheist and had renounced Christianity, he encouraged questioning the orthodox Hindu customs and conventions on the basis of Judeo-Christian rationalism.

Kashiprasad Ghose (1809-1837) is also an important poet in Indo-Anglian literature. He has contributed through his well-crafted poems in Indian English literature. 'The Shair and Other Poems' (1830) is widely known collection of poems written by him. Even he is considered as the first Indian to publish a regular volume of English verse. His poetry gives the glimpse of originality and conventional descriptions.



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Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873), began writing while he was at Hindu College. While a student at Hindu College, his poems in Bengali and English were published in Bengal Spectator, Literary Gleamer, Calcutta Library Gazette, Literary Blossom and Comet. He was greatly inspired by Lord Byron. "Meghnad-Badh" is an epic poem written by him. Through this poem, he got the status of a great poet. In this poem, he shows the villainous Ravan as a Hero.

Of Toru Dutt's two collections, only one of them was published in her own life-time. "A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields" (1876) containing 165 English translations of the lyrics originally written by French poets. Her another major poem "Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan" was published



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posthumously. M.K. Naik writes:

Toru Dutt is the first Indian English poet to make an extensive use of Indian myth and legend, though scattered references to these had been employed by her predecessors. Furthermore, her treatment of these legends reveals, on the whole, an instinctive understanding of the spirit underlying them, though as a recent Christian convert living in a half-anglicized environment at home, she occasionally betrays certain inadequacies. (41)

Thus, Toru Dutt is the first woman poet to contribute in Indian English literature. It can be observed that all these poets died at the very early age like the second-generation Romantic poets. Though, their contribution inspired from Romantic poets, they are deemed vital to the treasure house of Indian Writing in English during the nineteenth century. The third phase was the emergence of novel in Indian English literature. It is discussed in detail as this research is primarily focuses on the genre novel.

### **The Emergence of 'Novel' Form:**

Indian writings in English was the historical encounter of two cultures both Indian and western for nearly hundred and ninety years. With this, Indian people experienced the impact of the western culture. The enormous blow gave expression to the feelings and experiences to the writers in English with the establishment of four Universities and Western educational system. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was the first Indian who published his first novel named "Rajmohan's Wife" which was serialised as "Wife" in the Calcutta weekly, The Indian Field, in 1864. It was published in the book form in 1930. Bankim Chandra was influenced heavily by the British novelists Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens.



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*Rajmohan's Wife* is a novel about the sufferings of a middle-class housewife, Matangini, at the hands of her husband Rajmohan. It was the time of social reforms when the novel was published and thus it is not a surprise that it is a social novel.

This is rather melodramatic tale of the trials of a typical, long-suffering Hindu wife, Matangini, at the hands of her husband, Rajmohan, who is bully, the setting being an East Bengal village in the late nineteenth century. Sketchy and lacking in adequate character-motivation, the novel compares most unfavourably with this author's later masterpieces in Bengali. An interesting feature of style is the liberal use of Indian words, creating local colour. (Naik 111)

Till the end of nineteenth century, the novels have been mostly published by the writers from Bengal and Madras, so it is obvious that the setting of these early novels have been Bengal.

### Conclusion

Most early novels in English by Indians were almost invariably imitative and immature. The early novelists' choice of themes was stereotypical and their grasp over the language was uncertain. Most of the novels were social and historical in theme. They are based on the nineteenth century British fiction. Mostly they have taken as model the novels of Defoe, Fielding and Scott.



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