

An Overview of Colonial and Post-colonial Punjabi Literature

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Abstract:

This article explore the relationship between colonialism and Punjabi literature. To better understand this relationship a comparison of colonial and postcolonial Punjabi literature is presented. Colonial Punjabi Literature is influenced by the Imperial process of colonization. New themes and genres were introduced during Colonial period of Punjabi Literature. Reaction and resistance against colonizers is also a dominant theme of Punjabi literature produced during colonial period. Post-colonial writers restructured the imported colonial art-forms to assimilate the style, structure, and themes of native styles of literary expression. They expressed new themes in in literary genres introduced during colonial period. Visible changes in the style, structure and themes of Punjabi Literature are found in Post-colonial period. Overall, colonization has its positive as well as negative impacts on Punjabi Literature.

Keywords: Colonial, Post-colonial, Pakistani literature, Punjabi literature, resistance.

Historical Background of Punjabi Literature

Punjabi literary history is divided into four periods. Early Punjabi literature (11th-15th century), Mughal and Sikhs periods (16th century to 1857), the colonial period (1858-1947) and Post-independence literature (1947 to date). Post-independence period is further divided into two categories that west Punjab (Pakistan) and east Punjab (India). This article presents a brief comparison of the two periods i.e. the Colonial period and post-independence period with focus on west Punjabi literature.

The Colonial Period (1858-1947)

Novel, drama, free verse entered into Punjabi literature through the introduction of British education during colonial period. The first printing press for for printing Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was established at Ludhiana in 1835.for the first time Punjabi dictionary was published in 1854.

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Nanak Singh (1897–1971) and Vir Singh promoted Punjabi novel.

New genres such as novels and short stories highlighted new themes and experiences. Post colonial Punjabi literature also described the theme of partition. Colonial Punjabi poetry explored the experiences of the common people and also expressed nationalism and freedom movement.

Modernism was also introduced into Punjabi poetry during this time.

Post-Independence literature (1947-)

West Punjab (Pakistan)

Afzal Ahsan Randhawa, Najm Hossein Syed and Fakhar Zaman are some of the prominent literary figures in Punjabi literature produced after 1947. Scholars such as Shafqat Tanveer Mirza, Ahmad Salim and Najam Hussain introduced new literary criticism in Punjabi.

Effects of English Language on Punjabi Language

When the British became the rulers of India, they adopted English as their official language. Thus a lot of English words assimilated into the Punjabi language. Now-a-days these words have become part of Punjabi language and literature. Among these words some are uttered with minor changes and the others are used as it as e.g. doctor, hospital, station, ticket, school, university etc. (Hashmi, 2004, p. 23).

English Period in Punjabi Literature (1849-1947)

While classifying the Punjabi Classical Literature, it has been divided into five periods i.e. Period of Delhi Emperors, Mughal Period, Sikh Period, English Period and Neo-classical Period. The British occupied Punjab in 1849. After their occupation political and social changes are found in Punjab. Urdu and English were declared as official languages replacing Persian. On account of introducing Western education, the English literature was also introduced here which influenced the Punjabi Literature greatly (Hashmi, 2004, p. 54).

Punjabi Poetry and Colonialism

The British or English period in Punjabi Literature is considered from 1849 to 1947. It starts from the downfall of the Mughals (Rizvi, 2007, pp. 68, 87). In this period we see prominent Punjabi poets like Syed Fazal Shah, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, Khwaja Ghulam Farid, Mulvi Ghulam Rasul Alampuri, Mian Muhammad Bota and Mian Hidayatullah. In this period Punjabi poetry developed according to its tradition but colonial impact are visible in the themes. In the period of neo-classical Punjabi poetry, two traditions of Punjabi poetry are found. Among them one is the ancient tradition and the second tradition is of the Punjabi poetry affected by English and Urdu literature (Rizvi, 2007, p. 58). Before World War I, the British Government passed a new law regarding the new habilitation of Loyal Pur (Faisal Abad). All of the farmers and landlords protested against this law. At last this protest emerged in the shape of Kisan Movement in 1907. Numerous poems were written for this movement. Punjabi poets also played a role in strengthening the Khilafat Movement. Besides, we find resistance against

colonizers in Punjabi poetry written in the wake of Jalianwala Bagh incident (1919), Ghadar Party (1914-15), Central Punjabi Sabha (1925-26), Noncooperation Movement (1933-34), Quit India Movement (1942) and the Freedom Movement of Pakistan. Dr. Shehbaz Malik has written a book 'Azadi di Mujahid Likari'. In this book all those Punjabi poets have been mentioned who have written against British Imperialism and Colonization. Dr. Inam ul Haq Javed has also written a book in English Pakistan in Punjabi Literature in which the role of the Punjabi poets in the freedom movement has been described (Rizvi, 2007, p. 62).

Modern Punjabi poetry has been influenced by English poetry. The genre of free verse borrowed from English has been introduced into modern Punjabi poetry. After the two world wars the thinking of the poets changed. Progressive Movement has also affected Punjabi poetry. During Pakistan Freedom Movement new themes and thoughts came into Punjabi poetry. Awareness about new disciplines and fields of knowledge expanded the themes of Punjabi poetry. Punjabi poetry looked into the depth of humans and thus we affirm the theory of art for life's sake while discussing Punjabi modern poetry. Modern Punjabi poets used impressionism and symbolism while describing subtleties of life (Zahid, 2004, p. 103). Industrialization and modern technology created psychological complexities. Punjabi poets felt these complexities and social changes and described them in a skillful way.

In twentieth century when the common people resisted against the inhuman treatment of the invaders, they depicted it in their folklore. Emergence of Modern Poem is the product of colonialism.

During English Period, in Punjabi literary history, scholars wrote, books on religious topics, in Punjabi Poetry. Among them a few well-known names are: Hafiz Muhammad Lakhwi, Nabi Bakhsh Halwaye, Khuda Bakhsh Wa'iz, Mulvi Habibullah, Feroz-ud-Din Deski, Mian Jan, Zahor-ud-Din Akmal, Mulvi Mahboob Alam etc (Sindhi, 1992, p. 347). Many poets wrote romantic poems and stories. At the end of nineteenth century ghazal has also been developed. In Modern Period, Punjabi Literature has developed rapidly. Punjabi poets have attempted in every type of genres. In past, prose books have been written in less number while in modern period research papers, short stories, dramas, and sketches have been written more (Sindhi, 1992, p. 348).

In a nutshell colonialism and British imperialism influenced the form and contents of modern Punjabi poetry. Poets who wrote against colonialism are Ishaq Lehar, Hakim Abdullatif Arif, Abdul Qadir Khoshtar, Malak Laldin Khoshtar, Ustad Karam Amratsari, Zaheer Niazbigi, Maulana Muhammad Bakhsh Muslim, Dayan Iqbal Dayee, Sehrayee Gordaspori etc (Zahid, 2004, pp. 104, 105).

Modern Punjabi Poem

In British period, where new ideas began to spread, new genres were also introduced in poetry. Among these new genres one is Modern Punjabi Poem. Free Verse a new genre in poem started under the influence of Colonialism. It is also a type Modern Punjabi Poem (Sindhi, 1992, p. 342). Progressive Movement also played its role in the development of modern Punjabi poem. Sharif Kunjahi is the founder of modern Punjabi poem (Zahid,

2004, p. 115). Major themes of the poems of Sharif Kunjahi are humanism, individual freedom and suffering of common people. Conscripted during World War Second has also been described in the poems of Sharif Kunjahi (Zahid, 2004, p. 116). Sharif Kunjahi and Ahmad Rahi wrote under Progressive Movement (Hashmi, 2009, p. 59). The East India Company, in India, ran British Imperialism in the 1600s and 1700s as a means of investment. It got funds from investors and with those funds it hired Indian mercenary troops. Those troops were used for the Company's advantage to take part in the political quarrels of Mughal India. The funds also increased the Company's holdings, and the investors were also paid back. However, with the passage of time the British government enhanced their control of the Company and its policies in India. The Company, in its weak form, was turned over by the war of 1857-58, and the British government dismantled the Company and started direct colonial rule over India. Ahmad Rahi in his poems has described the culture of Punjab, background of the partition of India, and miseries and troubles in the times of migration after partition (Zahid, 2004, p. 119). Baqi Siddiqi has used symbolism in his poems while describing tyranny and social upheavals (Zahid, 2004, p. 120). Munir Niazi in his poems depicted social injustice and inequality, hatred and sense of deprivation etc (Zahid, 2004, p. 122). Other poets of Modern Poem are Altaf Qureshi, Arif Abdul Mateen, Afzal Ahsan Randhawa, Bashir Manzar, Afzal Pervez and Dr. Laiq Bari.

Novel

The Punjabi novel has developed during colonial period. Bhai Veer Singh (1872-1957) is the founder of the Punjabi novel (Haider, 2006, p. 209). He has written historical novels and novels on religious themes. Nanak Singh, another novelist, has written 35 novels. Main themes of his novels are the sufferings of common people, misuse of religion, and foreign invasion on India (Haider, 2006, p. 210). Herban Singh has written Punjabi novel 'Shakuntala'. In this novel he has described Freedom Movement in detail (Haider, 2006, p. 210). Joshwa Fazal Din has written a novelette "Manday daa Mool" in 1928. The clash of eastern and western civilizations is the main theme of this novel (Haider, 2006, p. 212). Afzal Ahsan Randhawa has written a novel Sooraj Gerhan. The thinking of the East and the West has been described in it. Numerous novels have been written about the crisis after partition. Hut is fourth complete Punjabi novel after the creation of Pakistan. It was published in 1972. It reflects historical background of Punjab. Political and social condition of the Punjab, before the partition, has also been depicted in this novel. It also discusses the role and behavior of British imperialism (Haider, 2006, p. 222).

Punjabi Drama

Punjabi drama started in the twentieth century but it developed and became popular after the creation of Pakistan. Among the radio dramatists, prominent names are Sajad Haider, Agha Ashraf and Ashfaq Ahmad (Javed, 1986, p. 42). At first English dramas were translated into Punjabi language. First Punjabi drama published in book form is that of Ishor Chandar Nanda Dulhan. It was staged in 1913 in Diyal Singh College (Javed, 2004, p. 170). The Principal of GC Lahore, G.D Sondhi, brought drama from closed theaters to the open area of the then Lawrance Bagh (Jinnah Bagh) (Javed, 2004, p. 171).

Numerous other English dramas have been translated into Punjabi language (Javed, 2004, p. 179). Missionaries also used to dramatize stories from Bible.

Short Stories

The tradition of story-telling had been reached to its peak by Waris Shah and Hashim Shah (Ashrafi, 2006, p. 213). On the basis of this tradition short stories developed in Colonial Period. Punjabi short stories started in reaction to the Biblical stories of the missionaries. After the creation of Pakistan, this literary genre developed rapidly and writers started depicting every type of social problem in short stories. With the passage of time abstraction and symbolism also started in short stories (Javed, 2004, p. 157). After the creation of Pakistan, Punjabi short story developed rapidly. Among the prominent short story writers of this period, a few prominent names are: A. Hameed, Najam Hussain Sayyed, Anwar Sajad, Asad Mufti, Anees Nagi, Munir Shaikh, Dr. Laiq Bari and many more (Chaudhry, 2006, p. 194).

Punjabi Folklore and orientalist

European scholars have given considerable attention to the folk poetry in Punjab. According has described its similarity of swing and music with the boarder ballads of Scotland and England. Colonel Sir Richard Temple has written his monumental book titled Legend of the Panjab on this subject (Grierson, n.d, p. 618).

Causes of Reaction and Resistance, in Punjabi Literature, against Colonization

Post-colonial writers resorted to detailed descriptions of native people, places and customs to nullify the incorrect information, and generalizations which the colonizers introduced in educational, legal, political and social texts.

Most of the people are of the opinion that the British imperialism has favoured Punjab in many aspects such as agricultural colonization. It helped in the economic development of Punjab. It also increased manifold the employment opportunities in public works, irrigation and revenue departments. This economic growth also helped in creating opportunities for entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors and many more (Saleem, 2011, p.405).

But despite all these benefits still resistance and reaction against colonization is found in Punjabi Literature against colonizers. Some researches have also dig out the causes of this reaction and resistance against colonization. Main cause was the maltreatment of the Punjabis/Indians by the British officials. This offensive treatment was not bearable particularly for Muslims because for centuries they had received special privileges and honour in this region. The colonizers considered themselves as superior to the local population. Indians were not allowed to English clubs but only in capacity of servants. Even some benches in parts and carriages in Railway were specific 'for Europeans only' (Saleem, 2011, p.402).

Asserting Cultural Integrity

During Colonization, the native culture of the Punjab was sidelined and suppressed in favour of glorifying the social and cultural values of Great Britain. As a reaction, much post-colonial literature made an attempt to affirm the richness and validity of indigenous

cultures. The colonialists wanted to show themselves as superior to the natives. That is why they tried to prove their culture and lifestyle superior to that of the Punjab. History shows that invaders adopted local culture but Britishers stayed aloof, considered themselves superior and thus created two cultures in India (Saleem, 2011, p.403).

Colonial Language Policy

The colonialists did not give the Punjabi language and its literature any state patronage. Urdu was chosen the official language. The colonialists adopted Urdu as the official language because of the connection between script and religious community. Punjabi was associated with the Sikh community. Some people in the government thought that declaring Punjabi as official language might unite the Sikhs and may become a threat to the British power. Secondly, many colonial officials declared Punjabi as undignified and unfit for the official status. Thirdly, Urdu was given preference because many colonial administrators were familiar with Urdu rather than of Punjabi. The promotion of Urdu was also in the interests of the elite, which in turn supported the colonial administration. Moreover, many Punjabi dialects were in use at the same time in Punjab, and thus it would have been difficult to select only one dialect and make it the official language. So Urdu was declared to be the lingua franca to help in the integration of Punjab into the company's other territories.

The colonialists replaced regional languages by English and Urdu and made it a medium of instruction in standard educational institutes. Two classes emerged on the base of western education and English language. It affected the education of masses and majority of them remained uneducated (Saleem, 2011, p.403). Post-colonial writers employed indigenous language to show their unwillingness for a language forced on them.

The Role of Journalists and Educationists in the Development of Modern Education and Literature in the Punjab

Many of the historians are of the opinion that the British Imperialists, and especially the politicians, did not try for the spreading of education in its true sense. It was only because of the efforts of journalists and missionary educationists that modern education spread in British colonies (Saleem, 2011, p.404).

Fall of Royal Houses: Its Impact on the Punjabi Literature

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British were mainly confined to parts of the coasts of the subcontinent, so expansion to the interior of India was slow. They also took advantage of the differences among the local rulers to increase their control over the area. It was only in the mid 1800s that the British controlled most of the subcontinent. Usually creative artisans, poets and writers are dependent on royal houses but with the fall of the royal houses damage to this industry started because the creative artisans were dependent on their patronage. Rapid adjustment with new administration was difficult for craftsmen and thus they suffered an irrecoverable loss (Saleem, 2011, p.406).

But the fall of the Royal Houses had its positive impact on Punjabi Literature as well. Due to the fall of Royal Houses, we see the Punjabi Literature, based on the theory of "art for

life's sake". Whenever literature is patronized by the royal houses and darbars, it does not reflect a true picture of society but only praises the upper class of society.

Criticism on Industrialization in Punjabi Literature

Negative effects of industrialization by colonialism, has also been criticized by Punjabi writers because factory competition destroyed the traditional handicrafts. This caused unemployment of thousands of people. (Saleem, 2011, p.407).

Colonization, Law and Justice and Punjabi Literature

The problem of law and justice, which is still prevailing in Pakistan, has been pointed out in colonial Punjabi Literature (Saleem, 2011, p.408).

World Capitalist System

Capitalism has remained a major theme of colonial and post-colonial Punjabi Literature. We see capitalism as a subject in the Punjabi novels and short stories. Colony is integrated into the world capitalist system in a subordinate position.

Foreign Political Domination

Colonialists or British Imperialists have been depicted in Punjabi Literature as invaders. That is why foreign political domination is also a theme of Punjabi Colonial and Post-colonial literature. While discussing the foreign political domination in Punjabi Literature we see themes of unequal change, external integration and internal disarticulation, and drain of wealth etc.

Conclusion

The colonial period in Punjabi literature starts from 1858 and ended in 1947. Similarly Post-colonial literature starts from 1947 and continues till today. This article explored how colonized have expressed their experiences of being colonized. New literary genres such as novel, drama, short story and free verse have emerged during the colonial period. During post-colonial period in Punjabi literature new themes have been discussed in these genres. Colonialism has its impacts on Punjabi literature. Themes related resistance are found in the Punjabi literature of colonial time and themes related to nationalism and identity are found in the post-colonial Punjabi literature. Still we find some imperial legacies in Punjabi literature. Although many new themes are found in the post-colonial literature but major themes like a nation state are not dominant in Punjabi post-colonial literature.

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