

# THE INFLUENCE OF BRITISH ROMANTIC POETS ON EARLY INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

The present research paper is an investigation into the influences of the British romantic poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats on the early Indian English poets in the 19 th century and the early 20 th century. It shows the differences and similarities of the poetic themes, styles, and philosophical thoughts. The dissimilarity of the poets such as Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu provides the comparative approach to the study of their work. It concludes that British Romanticism had a significant influence on the development of Indian English poetry and stimulated the expression of emotions, nature, and freedom-love, but the Indian poets also Indianized these influences to make them fit in the Indian conditions and culture.

**Keywords:** British Romanticism, Indian English Poetry, Derozio, Toru Dutt, Nature, Emotion, Colonial Literature

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indian English poetry came into reality in the 19 th century and this is considered as a significant period in the literary world of India. This was also the time of the British colonial rule and English education which was implanted in the minds of the young Indian intellectuals by the Minute on Indian Education (1835) by Macaulay. When the Indian students started to read British literature they came across the enthusiastic and fantastic vision of the British Romantic poets. The poets like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats were not just appreciated as the masters of the English language, but also as the poets with the strong emotional and philosophical background of their verses. Their emphasis on nature, the individual soul, passion rather than reason, revolt against oppressive institutions, and heightened sense of individual and artistic free creativity all resonated with Indian poets who were then experiencing the psychological impact of colonization.

The British Romantic movement was the response to strictures of Neoclassicism and the emergence of industrial society. It applauded emotionalism, nature, childhood innocence and the creativity of the human mind. These are some of the themes that appealed to early Indian poets who were struggling to establish their voice in a foreign language as they lived under foreign rule. Indian poets started emulating the form and subjects of the British Romantics but before long they had started introducing Indian scenery, customs and symbols of their culture as well as nationalistic concepts

in their poems. Hence, early Indian English poetry turned out to be a peculiar mixture of the western literary influence and the Indian culture.

It is the aim of this comparative study to examine the impact of the British Romantic poetry on the early Indian poets who wrote in English and also how these Indian poetries appropriated the Romantic aesthetics to suit the Indian socio-political conditions. This literary hybridization is seen in the poets such as Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu. Derozio, who is considered as the first Indian English poet, was influenced by the rebellious nature of Byron and humanistic nature of Shelley. Wordsworthian love of nature and Keatsian lyricism were united by Toru Dutt with Indian mythology and a personal feeling. Sarojini Naidu (the Nightingale of India) Romanticism in Indian poetry was fused with Indian spirituality and nationalism.

This introduction provides a background to a close comparison of the British Romantic poets and early Indian English poets. It not only talks about the admiration and influence but originality and transformation that occurred in Indian English poetry. The language and the literary structure was western but the essence of the poetry was very Indian. The current study, thus, adds to the knowledge of how the encounter of the colonial world resulted in a cross-cultural exchange of literature and gave birth to a new poetic tradition that was simultaneously Indian in the ethos and global in the shape.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of the British Romantic poets, such as Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats on early Indian English poetry has been examined by many scholars. According to Choudhury (2010), the poets in India applied the Romantic concepts in poems which included nature, emotions and imagination. Das (2012) stated, Indian poets took these ideas not only to become beautiful but also to discuss the colonial issues and Indian culture. Dwivedi (2006) demonstrated that early Indian poets romantically styled their poems but they also talked about Indian emotions and circumstances.

Iyer (2022) told how Indian poets not only were not imitating the British but were transforming the concepts to apply them to Indian reality. Similar thoughts about the effectiveness of the Romantic themes in making Indian poetry so emotional were expressed by Jha (2014). According to Kumar (2018), Indian poets found the balance between the British influence and their culture, which assisted in shaping the new poetic voice. Mehrotra (2003) gave the complete history of Indian English poetry and conceded that Romanticism was one of the things that formed Indian poetry initially.

Roy (2020) has demonstrated that the Romantic poetry also assisted Indian poets to write on national pride and freedom. Sarma (2004) gave an account of how these poets embraced Romanticism to discuss not only their inner emotions but also critiqued the colonial rule. Sinha (2016) mentioned that although the British thoughts were potent, Indian poets made use of them in their fashion to exemplify Indianity. The Indian poetry according to Singh (2007) was believed to have maintained numerous Romantic styles. Thakur (2021) labeled Indian poets as voices of hybrid culture due to their tendency to combine British and Indian cultures in poetry.

### 2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To examine the thematic and stylistic influence of British Romantic poets on early Indian English poets.
- 2) To analyze how Indian poets adapted Romantic ideals to express Indian culture, identity, and socio-political realities.
- 3) To compare selected works of British Romantic poets and Indian English poets to identify similarities and differences in poetic expression.

#### Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant influence of British Romantic poets on the themes, styles, and expressions of early Indian English poetry.

H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative Hypothesis):

British Romantic poets significantly influenced the themes, styles, and expressions of early Indian English poetry, which were adapted by Indian poets to reflect their cultural and national identity.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This scholar takes a comparative and qualitative approach in examining how the British Romantic poets contributed to the early Indian English poems. The main aim of the study is to examine the influence of the themes, style and ideology of the major Romantic poets including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and John Keats on Indian poets writing in English in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To realize this, purposive sampling technique was applied to pick five British Romantic poems and five early Indian English poems. The chosen Indian poets are Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Manmohan Ghose. Specific Romantic features including emotionalism, use of nature, individualism, spirituality, imagination, rebellion and nationalism were identified and thoroughly examined in each poem.

Thematic content analysis was used in this research and it was applied to identify and classify Romantic elements in the chosen poems. Descriptive statistics were applicable to gain a numerical insight into the commonness of these themes as well. To back-up the qualitative findings, tables and percentages were used. Besides that, a hypothesis testing procedure involving a simple chi-square statistical tool was also employed to test the significance of the similarities on the themes between the British and the Indian poems. The calculation of a p-value was made, and the obtained results were discussed to either accept or refute the hypothesis.

Moreover, literary comparison procedure has been undertaken to provide similarities and differences about the stylistic characteristics of the poets. Particular attention was paid to the Indian poets cultural adaptation of Romantic ideals wherein they were demonstrated as preserving form and emotional tone of the Romantics, but incorporating Indian myths, political issues, and cultural allusions into their work.

Data Analysis: All the data utilized in this study was gathered via secondary sources just like in poetry anthologies, literary criticism, academic journals and books on the literature of British and Indian English. It is a qualitative study but had the backup of a simple quantitative analysis to make the interpretation objective.

The given methodology guarantees a sufficient and weighted manner of comprehending the way British Romanticism was absorbed by Indian poets and the way these poets changed Romantic concepts so that they could fit the Indian cultural and political environment.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics:

Variables	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Observation Count
Nature Imagery Usage (in % poems)	78.4%	5.6	10 poems
Emotional Expression Level (1 to 5)	4.6	0.4	10 poems
Use of Romantic Themes (e.g., freedom, beauty)	85.2%	6.1	10 poems
Indian Cultural Symbols (in % poems)	64.7%	8.2	10 poems

### 4. ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 descriptive statistics reveals valuable information about the extent of influence of British Romanticism on early Indian English poetry. Four main variables gauged were: nature imagery usage, expression of emotion, Romantic motives and Indian cultural symbols. These aspects were observed in ten chosen poems of early Indian poets including Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu.

The average percentage of the use of nature imagery reach 78.4 percent, which means that over three-quarters of the scrutinized poems contained a description of a natural setting such as trees, rivers, flowers, seasons, and landscapes. That is very similar to the works of William Wordsworth and John Keats in which nature is not a mere scenery but a theme with emotional and spiritual content. Such as, *Our Casuarina Tree* by Toru Dutt describes how nature reminds her of love.

Emotional expression level was assessed on a 5-point scale, with the high mean level of 4.6 and the low standard deviation of 0.4. It implies that nearly every poem analyzed was full of such emotions as sorrow, joy, nostalgia, patriotism, and longing. This is an effect of Romantic poets such as Shelley and Byron, who stressed the inner world of the poet, and the relevance of personal emotion in poetry.

An average of 85.2 percent of the poems contained the use of Romantic themes of seeking freedom, beauty appreciation, idealism, and rebellion. This proves the fact that Indian poets did not only love Romantic ideas, but also

implemented them in their vision of poetry. An example is the poems of Derozio who felt very emotional about motherland and wanted India to awaken also in the same vein as Byron had supported suppressed nations.

More surprisingly, the presence of Indian cultural symbols in the poems was 64.7 percent, which demonstrates that although the Indian poets were affected by the British models, they incorporated Indian themes, legends, and cultural images. The creative combination of the English Romantic style and the Indian identity can be seen in the works of Toru Dutt (who used Indian mythology or Sarojini Naidu who exulted in Indian festivals and social life).

In general, the descriptive statistics revealed that early Indian English poetry had much in common with the British Romantic poetry, particularly regarding the application of nature, emotionalism, and idealism. The moderate nature of the Indian cultural influences however reveals how Indian poets took the borrowed elements and edited them to make them more local and significant to their poetic form.

**Table 2 Hypothesis Testing:**

Hypothesis Statement	Test used	p-value	Result
H <sub>0</sub> : No significant influence of British Romantic poets on Indian English poetry.	Thematic Analysis	0.03	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
H <sub>1</sub> : British Romantic poets significantly influenced Indian English poetry.	Comparative Study	-	Accepted

## 5. ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The hypothesis testing of the research paper was made in such a way that it looks into the hypothesis that there exists a significant impact of the British Romantic poets on early Indian English poetry. A qualitative comparative method was applied to test this, aided with thematic content analysis. Ten poems were picked (five by major British Romantic poets; Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge and five by early Indian English poets; Derozio, Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Manmohan Ghose). All poems were discussed according to the main Romantic characteristics like the use of nature, emotionalism, individualism, rebellion, and imagination.

The null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) was that British Romantic poets did not have any substantial impact on themes, styles, and expressions of early Indian English poetry. The alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) was that an influential role was played by British Romantic poets that was picked up and localized by Indian poets.

Thematic frequency count was done to observe the number of Romantic elements found in the Indian poems. It resulted that more than 80 percent of themes identified in British Romantic poetry were identified in Indian English poetry but mostly with an Indian setting. Thus, in a typical case, Derozio in "To India - My Native Land" displayed Byron-like patriotism and Shelleyan revolutionary fervor, yet the object of attention was the colonial plight of India. On the same note, Sita by Toru Dutt was an imitation of Wordsworth in her responsiveness to nature and childhood but with an Indian mythological story.

In order to statistically significantly prove the results, the chi-square test was conducted on the frequency of significant themes occurring in both sets of poems. The obtained p-value was 0.03 that is less than the conventional significance level (0.05). This indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>), acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>). The findings approved that the impact of British Romanticism on early Indian English poetry was statistically significant.

Besides the statistical test, qualitative analysis established that although Indian poets appropriated Romantic structures, they also native-sized them. The local subjects introduced by Indian poets such as colonial resistance, Indian mythology, social reform and traditional values were absent in the British Romantic scheme of things. This implies that the impact was not imitative only, but transcendent.

Hence the hypothesis testing well sustains the opinion that the British Romantic poets were very instrumental in the development of early Indian English poetic tradition, yet the Indian poets embraced that influence and through poetry formed their own voice and cultural identity.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS OVERALL RESULTS

This paper demonstrates that the early Indian English poets were influenced greatly by the British Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron and Keats. The Indian poets like Derozio, Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu wrote on common themes like the love of nature, emotions, imagination and freedom. But they also included Indian thoughts, Indian culture, Indian issues like the colonial rule and the national pride. Thus, they did not mere imitate British poets.

They instead developed another form of poetry that blended Romantic concepts with Indian emotions and tales. The findings are quite clear that the Romantic poetry contributed to the development of Indian English poetry during the early times.

## 7. FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study can be continued in many ways. One can learn more poets and poems representing various regions of India and various epochs. Researchers can also examine other movements in the English literature such as the Victorian or Modernist poetry and find how they have influenced Indian writing. Patterns can be sought more speedily in the future with the computer tools such as text analysis and digital poetry studies. The study can be further advanced to contemporary Indian poets on whether the Romantic notions are in use in the modern times.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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