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Western Impact: Indian Response SISIR KUMAR DAS SAHITYA AKADEMI. Contents Preface xi Abbreviations xiv Prologue 1 | THE IDEA OF AN INDIAN LITERATURE.

Though some Indian critics have been only too keen to acclaim or denounce the influence of the West, the discriminating response of Indian writers offers more complex examples of both influence and intertextuality as forms of reception. India and Western literatures The earliest recorded transaction between Indian literature and Western literature was perhaps the translation of the Panchatantra, a collection of fables compiled around the 5th century A. Led by Sir William Jones and Sir Charles Wilkins, it was the British in Calcutta who, in the 18th century, began to translate prolifically from the Sanskrit a body of texts which would cause widespread wonder and admiration throughout Europe as these were subsequently translated from their English versions into other European languages. For so long merely Mediterranean, humanism began to be global [â€]; a whole buried world arose to unsettle the foremost minds of an age. But though Schwab and Said differ radically on whether this substantial body of translated Indian literature had a beneficial or a deleterious influence on the West, they are both agreed on how enormous and vital the influence was. In any case, as the British won more and more vital military victories in India and consolidated their colonial power, their regard for oriental texts seemed correspondingly to decline; their enhanced power over India neither facilitated nor seemed to depend on any enhanced knowledge of the country. Shortly afterwards, in fact, they instituted steps to make the Indians learn English and discover Western literature and come under its influence, in one of the clearest instances of a direct use of power to turn the tide of the flow of knowledge and its direction. The heyday of orientalism was by now clearly over, and it had by decree been replaced by a kind of occidentalism. Though the English language belonged at least nominally to the Indo-European family, its syntax, culture, social conventions, values and world-view were all as different as could be imagined. This by itself would have been enough to cause a great impact, but what made the impact incalculably greater was that English literature came to us as the literature of our masters. The influence of English literature on Indian literature may be one of the most extensive and profound influences ever exerted by one literature over another, but it still remains only a very small part of the larger master narrative, if one may so call it, of the impact of British colonial rule on India, and is inextricably entwined with it. It was not merely, or even mainly, a literary and cultural influence; it was a more comprehensively hegemonic oppression. Rather more prosaic in tone is an academic account of this influence written in English and first published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1957, one year after India attained independence: The bulk of it [i. It has [â€] become a fit medium for adult and civilized consciousness. More important than anything else, it has become humanized. Ghosh, who was one of the first Indians to obtain a D. Plays, Poems and Love-Letters, 2 volumes Oxford: He stayed on in England, though he never got a proper academic job as a university teacher of English, which apparently he hankered for all his life with his high qualifications; he could only manage little odd jobs as a drudge such as assisting with the revision of the Short-Title Catalogue, or short-term fellowships for a succession of assorted research projects, except for being appointed as a poorly paid lecturer, not in English but in Bengali in which he had no formal qualifications at the University of Cambridge. He remained a confirmed Anglophile, and his short history of Bengali literature, from which the above extract is taken, was written on a grant from the Rhodes Trust. Indian response In fact, not many Indian critics have been able to command the long perspective in which to view steadily and whole the older constitutive and shaping influence of Sanskrit literature on the literature of the modern Indian languages as well as the newer, unsettling and transformative influence of Western literature. What makes this period unique in our literary history is its continuous conflict between the indigenous and the alien ideals, values and sensibilities. It was not a contact between two authors or two texts, it was a contact between two civilizations in an unfortunate historical circumstance. Indeed, a direct consequence of our encounter with the West was that we went back to look again at what we already had and to reassess its worth and value. Unlike in some other parts of the colonised world, such as Africa and the West Indies and, in a different way, also the white settler colonies, we in India had something traditional, substantial and no less

rich of our own into which, and against which, to receive the Western impact and to cushion and even foil it. The Western influence on Indian literature was nothing if not dialectical and dialogic, which makes it perhaps as vast and complex an example as one could find anywhere in world literature not only of influence but also of reception. The anxiety to be influenced In this context, the Indian critical discourse on Western influence seems almost as fascinating as the influence itself, and contributes to the issue a paratextual if not quite metatextual dimension. This discourse seems to divide predictably into two broad categories, of critics who find such influence everywhere, and of other critics who are either reluctant to see such influence or tend to play it down. It has been in particular in critical discussions of the novel, which is generally agreed to have been a form that did not exist in India before the beginning of the Western influence, that influence studies have had a field day. One of the most impressive critical works here was produced as a doctoral thesis by Bharat Bhushan Agrawal, fairly late in his career, when he was already well known as a Hindi poet and novelist and held a senior administrative post in the Sahitya Akademi, the Indian National Academy of Letters. Hindi Upanyas par Pashchatya Prabhav Western Influence on the Hindi Novel , a lively page treatise, is as scholarly, sensitive, and searching an account of literary influence as perhaps any yet attempted in Hindi criticism, and therefore worth attending to for both its virtues and its limitations. In it, Agrawal sets out to explore Western influence on about a dozen modern Hindi novelists who came to prominence after the death in of the greatest Hindi novelist, Premchand. In one sense, of course, each thought or sentiment is [an example of] influence because, by definition, each thought that arises or is born in the mind cannot come into existence without some impact of the external world, yet there is a sufficient difference between the two even if of a subtle kind. However, such apparently postcolonial sturdiness does not stop Agrawal from treating all his chosen Hindi novelists as guilty almost of plagiarism until proved innocent, as if that were the recognised universal procedure for conducting influence studies. The Eyes of a Child, , a novel by Edwin Pugh. It is a deliciously ironical reflection on the nature of colonial influence that while the novel in question by Ajneya, Shekhar: Ek Jivani 2 vols, , is agreed to be one of the greatest Hindi novels of the twentieth century, Pugh " , who was a Fabian socialist and a prolific novelist of the realist Cockney school, does not even rate an entry in the Oxford Companion to English Literature. At other places, too, Agrawal appears to be as dogged and even obtuse an influence-hunter as can be imagined. In a major Hindi novel, Sunita by Jainendra Kumar, a male character says to a female: With a queer obedience, she lay down on the blanket. This may seem to be the bane not only of influence studies in general but of colonial influence studies in particular, where as much as possible in the text of a colonial writer is often sought to be shown to be derived from a Western writer, even if it is just a woman lying down. Broadly comparable in attitude to Agrawal is a later critic, Jaidev, who was Professor of English at the university in Shimla, and whose work of criticism, written in English and titled The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel deals with the work of four later Hindi novelists who all began writing after India gained independence in , and who may therefore at least technically be called postcolonial. At the same time, he expressed serious doubt, in the allusive and untranslated Hindi title which he pointedly gave his paper written in English, whether such postcolonialism will ever come to pass. The distinction between the centre and the periphery seems no longer to hold or is said even to have been reversed " with the attendant paradox that if there is now no difference between the centre and the periphery, there is not much point perhaps in being the new centre. For instance, Michael Baxandall tells us that if we think not of influence on but influence for, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: Again, the historical colonial experience of being influenced by the West does not show many of the possibilities listed by Baxandall as having been available as real options. To cite very briefly a couple of examples, two of the four novelists whom Jaidev considers in his book to be pasticheurs if not worse have had career trajectories that seem tailor-made for intertextual creativity. Nirmal Verma " , probably the foremost Hindi novelist of the last postcolonial half-century, was the son of a senior bureaucrat of the British Raj, and got his B. Verma, in contrast, decided to write in Hindi, and in went on a scholarship to Czechoslovakia where he learnt the language and translated several Czech writers into Hindi, including Milan Kundera before he became known in the West. After the Prague Spring of , Verma went to London and lived there for about two years before returning to India for good. Though he always wrote his fiction in Hindi,

Verma would often write his essays and conference papers in either English or Hindi, as seemed suitable. It could be argued that both Verma and Vaid know the West rather better than, say, Rushdie knows India, which he left forever when he was a mere child of thirteen. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* ; rpt. London, , pp. Lodge, *Small World* New York, , pp. *Debates and Contexts* Cambridge, , pp. Lodge, *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* London, , pp. Allen, *Intertextuality* London, , pp. *Theory and Practice*, ed. Das Shimla, , p. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*: New York, , pp. Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination* Delhi, For a textually detailed analysis of the connection between imperialism and Romantic Orientalism, see N. Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* ; rpt. Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Pollock Berkeley, , pp. *English Literature and India* Manchester, , p. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature* ; rpt. *Indian Response* New Delhi, , p. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* Oxford, Agrawal, *Hindi upanyas par pashchatya prabhav* New Delhi, n.

5. A history of Indian literature, western impact: Indian response / monograph. 5.

The year witnessed the publication of his first collection of verses entitled Janmalagna. From to he taught at West Bengal Education Service. He got his doctorate degree by simultaneously submitting two completely different theses at the University of Calcutta and the University of London in . He held the distinguished post of Tagore Professor from to . Das used to say that writing in English was not his choice but compulsion. Though some of his major scholarly works are in English, he wrote extensively in Bangla. All his literary works are almost without exception written in Bangla. Some of his most important literary and scholarly experiments like Aloukik Sanglap Uneathly Dialogues , situated at the crossroad of several literary genres, is in Bangla. Throughout his life he never stopped writing for children. His first collection of rhymes for children, Sonar Pakhi, came out in . In the same year his first book of essays, Madhusudaner Kobimanas, was also published. A comparatist by profession and inclination, Das was also what classical Comparative Literature vocabulary calls an "intermediary". These dialogues between two literary cultures distant in time and space found its best expression in Aloukik Sanglap, which consisted of imaginary conversations between Kalidasa and Aristotle or Parashuram and Orestes etc. In the meanwhile several such dialogues were being formed in his mind which made their way into some of his scholarly writings. From the late s Das started publishing a series of articles on the Bhakti movement and literatures formed out of it, exhibiting a coherent way of approaching the various Indian literary cultures by pointing out their constant contact and exchange with each other. Methods formulated out of this understanding of the dynamics of Indian literatures during the Bhakti movement served later as key concepts in his comprehensive historiography of Indian literatures. Earlier histories of Indian literatures, written mainly by Indologists , concentrated almost exclusively on the Sanskrit and occasionally Pali and Prakrit literary cultures. The history of the deshi Indian literatures often called Bhasha literatures , on the other hand, remained limited as they avoided pointing out the exchanges that one Indian language-literary culture made with the neighbouring ones. An integrated history of Indian literatures remained unwritten until Sahitya Akademi undertook the project and Das was entrusted with the task. The amount of labour that went into their making can be somewhat vouched from this statement of Das: Indian Response] is not a product of a man of leisure. I worked when people usually rested or relaxed. I offer my homage to their hallowed memoryâ€I earnestly hope my critics will not be merely engaged in finding faults and fallacies in this work- they must be too many- but will produce a much better history of Indian literatures replacing it.

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It is a country of bulk variety, arguably the most sundry nation in the world, whether it concerns religious, cultural, or ethnic diversity. The climate and landscape throughout the Indian subcontinent ranges dramatically from arid deserts to tropical rainforests. With a rapidly growing consumer base, and a swiftly rising overall economic output fueled by its young and increasingly educated population, India has begun its trip on the path to becoming a dominant world power within the next century as opposed to the dormant role it has played so far. The native people were subjected to the whims of British colonialism, which involved a strict system of monopolization to afford greater profits for the English. But around the turn of the century, the 2 Page Colonial Literature move toward Indian independence began to gather steam. The leader of this movement eventually came to be Mohandas Gandhi. The need for Comparative Literature: History of Comparative Literature in India: Nationalist movement The National Council had come into being in at an important moment in the history of the nationalist movement and in an effort to establish a system of education by the people that would best serve their interests. Contrary to the popular perception, decolonizing processes were never really the defining factors in carving out pedagogy. There were larger goals and visions. English literature had an important place in the syllabus and in the first phase Jesuit priests and Sanskrit scholars were part of the faculty. Indian National Movement during its earlier phase. Resistance to British rule had always been there, but it was in that large sections of Indian people in various regions made a combined effort to overthrow the British. That is why it is often termed as the first war of independence. Due to certain weaknesses the uprising was crushed by 3 Page Colonial Literature the British but as far as the struggle was concerned there was no going back. This inspired a new kind of struggle. The intelligentsia, which earlier believed in the benevolence of British rule now came forward to expose its brutality. Political associations were formed and the Indian National Congress played a vital role in directing the freedom struggle. We discuss in this Unit the role of moderates and militant nationalists and the efforts made during the Swadeshi Movement to involve the masses into the freedom struggle. National Council of Education The National Council for Education, in its previous status since , was an advisory body for the Central and State Governments on all matters pertaining to teacher education. Despite its commendable work in the academic fields, it could not perform essential regulatory functions, to ensure maintenance of standards in teacher education and preventing proliferation of substandard teacher education institutions. Buddhadeva Bose, a renowned poet 4 Page Colonial Literature whose name is linked with the beginning of the modernist movement in Bengali poetry in the thirties of the twentieth century, and who was also a profuse translator of modern non-English European poetry as well as of the classical Sanskrit author Kalidasa, was called upon to take charge of the department. Bose invited Sudhindranath Datta, another important modern poet and translator, to teach in the department. What I wish to underline is the fact that the foundational impulses of the discipline in Bengal were creative, with a focus on the training of the imagination, and were transnational, along with a trace of the historical imperative to look beyond the colonial masters. Jadavpur University It is important to go into the history of Comparative Literature in India a little before talking about its present state. Comparative Literature in India began in with the establishment of Jadavpur University in Calcutta, a university that had as its parent body the National Council of Education. We should mention here that my 5 Page Colonial Literature citation of events related to the department at Jadavpur University stems from the fact that it was the single full-fledged department of Comparative Literature in the country for a long period. Conclusion India is a country of immense linguistic diversity and, thus, a country of many literatures. Based on history, ideology, and often on politics, scholars of literature argue either for a unity of Indian literature or for a diversity and distinctness of the literatures of India. Instead of this binary approach, my proposal involves a particular view of the discipline of comparative literature, because I argue that in the case of India the study of literature should involve the notion of the interliterary process and a dialectical view of literary interaction. Let me begin with a brief account of linguistic diversity The unity in diversity and its perspectives

are the bases of Comparative Literature as a discipline in India. Such as Gurbhagat Singh who has been discussing the notion of "differential multilogue". He does not accept the idea of Indian literature as such but opts for the designation of literatures produced in India. Further, he rejects the notion of Indian literature because the notion as such includes and promotes a nationalist identity. As a relativist, Singh accords literatures not only linguistic but also cultural singularities. For Singh, comparative literature is thus an exercise in differential multilogue. His insistence on the plurality of logos is particularly interesting because it takes us beyond the notion of dialogue, a notion that comparative literature is still confined to. One of the reasons for this suspicion is that the key to the notion is held centrally, whether by an institution or a synod of experts leading to an accumulation of power. If we agree that power is the most ubiquitous social evil then the more decentralization the better. Decentralization minimizes the aggression from above as well as impels grass roots movements from below. Notes towards the Definition of a Category. Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism. The Johns Hopkins UP, A History of Indian Literature. Theory of Interliterary Process. Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal 2.

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The lyrical forms of Western Romanticism meet the sensibilities and aesthetics of the Urdu poetry indigenous to the East. Although Leyden worked within the immediate context of Indian culture, it is clear he was nonetheless influenced by literary and poetic inventions nearer to his birthplace. He attempted to present a melding or rather a reconciliation of these two simultaneously developing cultures, although it can surely be debated whether he succeeded or simply created a caricature of higher poetic traditions. Regardless of the extent of his success or his failure, Leyden fosters a novel interaction between two literary cultures spanning continents. Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, this literary movement strove to create an entirely new aesthetic. It was one that recognized the necessity of emotion and the purity of nature. Sentiment, raw and spontaneous, overrode the need for rationality. Nature itself became associated with transcendence and individual agency. Edwin Berry Burgum comments, "nature [was] an objective reality, virtually synonymous with God, to which the poet reverently subordinate[d] himself" 1. In this sense, nature assumed its very own sense of divinity, demanding a sort of written genuflection. The Romantic poet recognized its power and its potential. He expressed his appreciation and enthusiasm through terms of unadulterated sentiment. Still, despite this certain welcoming of overflowing emotion, the Romantic poets also recognized the need for formal poetic structures, placing particular emphasis on meter. In addition to these aesthetics, Romanticism also called into discussion both the virtues and the vices of political acquisition and occupation. In this respect, Romantic poets were not only concerned with the aesthetics to be found in their backyard, but also those to be found across continents and those to be gained by imperialism. For example, his characterization of nature through verse is consistent with that of the Romantic tradition. In this example, like many other descriptions of fantastic environments throughout his tale, he presents nature in its most sublime and yet most mystical form. There is a sense of a poetic reverence for nature as a separate and transcendent entity. The diction in itself, such as the use of "languid" and "verdure" attempt to recapture a quality of old world grandeur. The use of these conventions work to replicate the Romantic spirit. Like Byron, Leyden was also similarly attracted to the poetic potential of the Orient. He found inspiration in the culture and the literary customs of his immediate context. Thus, his very choice of subject matter points to a Romantic foundation. Although Leyden became engaged with eastern languages and traditions and took up residence in the East, he still remained under the influence of Western literary innovation. In particular, the author tried to interact with the interests of the Romantics and to replicate their various sensibilities. Appearing in the mid-eighteenth century, Urdu was derived from Sanskrit, although it borrowed equally from the Persian language. The former, early Sanskrit literature, developed in the form of court poetry. It became a public performance and soon gained ritual significance Das, 37 5. This court poetry responded to the demands of the aristocracy, containing imagery of lavishness and monarchical power. It is therefore no surprise that Urdu blended these elements in the creation of its verse. The Urdu tradition took elements of both Sanskrit lavishness, the language from which it was primarily derived, and Persian mysticism. He emphasizes the characters around which Urdu verse revolves, but also the timelessness of the mystical world they inhabit. Like the aforementioned influence of Romanticism, it can be assumed that Leyden worked within these indigenous traditions during his time spent in the Indian academic system and ultimately imported features of them into his own creations. Without a doubt, one can certainly see elements of which Das speaks within *The Tales of the Peries*: In this respect, Leyden achieves a certain authenticity to his verse and his larger work in general by incorporating these stock characters from Eastern poetic traditions. He rarely experiments with different and varied forms. Rarely does Leyden express himself in simplistic terms. Furthermore, Leyden also succeeds in achieving the traditional Urdu balance between poetic form and the imagined world. Both Romanticism and Urdu share similar aesthetics, although they emerge from very different cultural contexts. British Romantic Writers and the East:

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Sisir Kumar Das () was a poet, playwright, translator, comparatist and a prolific scholar of Indian blog.quintoapp.com is considered by many as the "doyen of Indian literary historiographers".

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