



PROSPECTIVE OF ANGLO-INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS

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ABSTRACT

Anglo-Indian women played a pivotal role in shaping the culture and mores of the Anglo-Indian community in India - and they still continue to do so wherever they live around the world today. Whether they are the wind beneath the wings of their men folk, well-loved matriarchs and home-makers within the family fold, dedicated social workers, or successful professionals holding their own in the arenas of medicine, law, accountancy and politics, our women are the unsung heroines. Yet it seems that almost every book that has reference to Anglo-Indians has something derogatory to say about Anglo-Indian women. It is imperative that we provide a balanced view of the Anglo-Indian woman - not exaggerated in any dimension (no pun intended) - just the way she was and is.

KEY WORDS: Anglo-Indian women, matriarchs and home-makers within the family.

Introduction

This article focus on the tribute contribution of Anglo-Indian and we would like to make up for that deficiency by celebrating "The Anglo-Indian Woman" in an anthology made up of non-fiction and fiction articles devoted exclusively to the world of Anglo-Indian women.



CONTRIBUTORS OF ANGLO-INDIAN LITERATURE

The publication, depicting Anglo-Indian women will cover a broad historical and contemporary canvas. This article could be first time narratives from the perspective of an Anglo-Indian woman, or third person stories about an Anglo-Indian woman friend or relative. We are looking for anecdotal material and well structured, annotated essays. These may be set in the past, or in the present, and the locale could be anywhere in the world. It could feature a fictional character modeled on real life, or an actual person who in some way changed the writer's emotional or mental outlook on life. Essays, anecdotes, or memoirs may be humorous or serious.

- Fiction pieces should be engrossing, (whether entertaining or moving - or both) and should feature as the main protagonist an Anglo-Indian woman or women who take center stage within the context of the piece.
- We will not consider material, which, in our sole discretion, is obscene or slanderous.
- The writing style should be meticulously polished but easy to read, and entertaining enough to provoke and sustain interest.
- Entry is not restricted to Anglo-Indians; anyone may participate in writing about "The Anglo-Indian Woman", provided that the content of their work illuminates a relationship or significantly important interactions with an Anglo-Indian woman, or women.

This article provides insight and balance into the reality of the Women of Anglo-India. We have captured not only who she was but how she lived. We have captured her as a mother, a wife, a sister, a girl friend and as a person in her own right. Many scholars have stated that the Anglo-Indian woman was the bedrock of the community, in many cases having to be the bread winner and the home builder.

The long rule of British in India quite naturally produced two types of literature called the "Indo Anglian" and "Anglo Indian". In this article I would like to focus on Anglo- Indian prosperity, which is very interesting and also I have discussed about the Indo Anglian Literature.

Anglo Indian literature comprises the works written about India. There is a large body of writing on Indian life and society, history etc by Englishmen including bureaucrats and missionaries. All these Anglo Indian writers were critical, in most cases of India and Indians. All what they wrote was primarily designed to influence opinion in Britain. In those times, it was from these works that the legislators, and that narrow section of the British people which made up public opinion, acquired their image of India. They preferred the evidence for India's depravity and backwardness. The prejudiced views of these Anglo Indian writers helped to create a climate in Britain favorable to the consolidation and advance of western ideas of government and economics in India. But there were Englishmen, who favorably disposed to India like William Sleeman. In his 'Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official', he has uncharacteristically painted the picture of an India damaged by contact with the west.

The fiction and poetry written during the period also reflected more or less the same urges, priorities and prejudices. Much of the Anglo Indian women literature represented a growing prospective racial consciousness amongst the British and was without merit. But there were few exceptions like Mrs. Sherwood's children's book. 'Confessions of a Thug' is a kind of novel by Meadows Taylor. It is based on the author's experiences in the suppression of 'Thugs', the robber cast of northern India. 'Oakfield or Fellowship in the East', a novel written by the poet William Delafield Arnold, is more of a tract than a novel. It is primarily an exposure of pettiness and wickedness of his countrymen in India.

One of the most important names that come up when we discuss Anglo Indian fiction is Rudyard Kipling. He became the laureate of Anglo India for a larger audience than it could ever have considered possible. Kipling explored the shallow lives of the British in India and reflected some, but by no means all, of their prejudices. The few Indians who appear in such work as was written in India are either servants or 'incompetent' educated Bengalis. It was only after leaving India Kipling was able to write 'Kim' what is undoubtedly the best work of fiction about India by an Englishman. Several works of Kipling are still quite popular, especially 'The Jungle Book', which continues to be lapped up by our children. As a novelist Rudyard Kipling is valued even today. But with his sense of racial superiority Kipling also became notorious for his pro-imperialist opinions.

As an Anglo Indian novelist E.M. Foster, the author of 'A Passage to India', is more important than Kipling. Though hailed by Indians for its attack on Anglo Indian society and its prejudices, is just as offensive in its drawing of Indian character as its predecessors. Foster succeeds in capturing the tensions, ambivalences and contradictions of colonial rule in India as well as the doubts and frustration and ignorance of a number of English officials and their wives in remote Indian town. Two other note-worthy Anglo Indian novelists are Flora Annie Steel and E.M. Thomson who are very famous Anglo Indian women writer.

When we come to Anglo Indian poetry we have say that it's worse than their fiction. Much of what they wrote was extremely awful; some reached a fairly high standard of mediocrity of Anglo-Indian women writers.

Conclusion

Anglo Indian women were the unsung heroines of our Community. While the male heads of households were involved in their careers, it was their women-folk who took on the tasks of rearing families with gentle (or sometimes not so gentle) discipline, instilling home-grown principles of honesty, diligence and respect for elders. They honoured Christian beliefs and true-blue Anglo-Indian traditions. As these stories reveal, many were widowed at a young age with meager finan-

cial resources; most had growing families to support, and their courage and determination in the face of tragedy makes for extraordinary reading. The contributors to this collection of essays pay tribute, sometimes with wry humour and at other times with deeply felt emotion, to the women who shaped their childhood years. Every reader will find parallels to their own personal 'heroines' - mothers, sisters, aunts and last, but far from least, those school teachers whose values have enriched their lives hats off to them.

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