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**Concept note:**

**Celebrating 75 years of Indian Independence: Indian Writing in English and Indian Writing in English Translation**

The appellation 'Indian Writing in English' instead of 'Anglo-Indian', 'Indo-Anglian' etc. is implicated in the longing for 'liberation' because it foregrounds the idea of celebration of the 'Indian spirit' in all the parameters of literature originally written in English. Despite the urge to shun conventional ways of tracing historical trajectory based on three formative phases—the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'colonial and reformist', the early 20<sup>th</sup> century 'nationalist, realist and progressive' and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'modernist, postmodernist'—the nuanced question of Independence has remained the abiding concern throughout. Pitted against the 'imperishable empire', writers of the 'colonial' and 'nationalist' phases endeavoured to uphold the 'spirit of Independence' at the wake of the Orientalist/Anglicist debate by fostering continuity with the 'golden' past while looking towards the liberal education and 'prestigious' language of the West. The issue of Independence and 'nationalism' took 'experimental directions' in the post-Independence Indian Writing in English, thanks to multiple factors, prime among which was the mood of disillusionment induced by failure to reach the kind of Independence the nation dreamt of. There was a craving for Independence in the linguistic communication, too. Long ago, Raja Rao emphasized the need of conveying 'one's own spirit' in a 'language not one's own and the need to catch the tempo of Indian life in 'our English expressions'. R. K. Narayan held that 'a creative work of first order' can be produced only in the 'mother tongue'. The 'new' writers reacted. Kamala Das wrote, 'The language I speak,/Becomes mine'. Keki Daruwalla professed his love for the 'half-caste' mistress called 'Indian English'. The novelists in the post-2000 generation (e.g. Amitava Kumar, Aravind Adiga) use a version of English that is much closer to the spoken Indian English and the novels are now characterized by neither italicized indigenous words nor glossary, nor annotation. The euphoria of 'fireworks and crowds' occasioned by the birth of the child at the moment of decolonization—'the precise instant of India's arrival at Independence'—was lost in the 'occult tyrannies' announced meta-fictively in Partition literature which exposed the agonies and contradictions of being 'handcuffed to history'. Salman Rushdie, with his magic realism, pseudo-autobiographies, penchant for 'chutnification', radical views about nationhood and racial mix, represents a hiatus between pre-Independence and post-Independence literature of the Indian Diaspora (the second largest in the world today) which has been dominant since 1981. The trauma of Partition gave rise to new aesthetic modes that still continue, and left an indelible mark on the form and preoccupations of the Indian English novel. It remains immanent in domestic novels too in which women (e.g. Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande) crave for an independent space. While Partition has been an abiding concern, Indian Emergency (1975-1977), one of the most controversial periods of independent India's history, has elicited responses from writers on debated issues like forced sterilization, displacements and arrests. Literature about the Emergency, which consolidated around such forms as 'political exposé' (in poetry, fiction and non-fiction), 'prison memoirs' etc. moved away from nationalist idealism. Indian English dramatists have blended history of Independence and myths to tackle the contemporary issues and to handle the theme of the muddled-ness of being an Indian. Indian English poets after Independence—beginning with the pioneers, continuing through the canonized and through the

acclaimed 'bohemian avant-garde little-magazine fraternity' (e.g. Kolatkar, Mehrotra) and culminating in the second generation poets (e.g. Sujata Bhatt, Jeet Thayil, Ranjit Hoskote, Arundhati Subramaniam)-resonate with the clarion call to break 'free' and to make it 'new'. Globalization, having given rise to consequent issues like migrancy, hybridity, loss of identity (significantly addressed by Naipaul, Mistry, Selvadurai among others), multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, has now led to 'neocolonialism' and 'neoliberalism' which tend to revisit the colonial history and the momentous event of political Independence. Reciprocating ideas with such theorists as Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner and others, the writers of the Indian Writing in English have been negotiating the pan-Indian as well as global questions of independence, nationalism, colonial modernity and imperialist history. But in the 21st century there has been a move away from the monumental 'national allegories' (Jameson) to the 'limited cultural narratives' of the local and the regional as evinced in a number of emerging writers. In the 'little narratives' (Lyotard) of the North-east, to cite an example, represented by Jahnavi Barua, Ratan Lal Basu, Eastarine Kire, Mamang Dai, Yumlum Tana, Temsula Ao among others, the issue of Independence and its aftermath has resurfaced in a vivid manner. The major preoccupations of Indian writing in English now are with 'Urban Realism', (e.g. Adiga, Arundhati Roy) 'Gender and Secular History' (e.g. Padma Viswanathan, Samina Ali, Githa Hariharan, Manju Kapur), 'Glocal India' (e.g. Hari Kunzru, Rama Dasgupta) and with the question of 'reinscribing the Past' (e.g. Amitav Ghosh). Shashi Tharoor and Amit Chaudhuri represent a significant development in the complex and evolving relationship between the old and the 'new India'. Leaving behind 'pulp fiction', 'science fiction' and 'military thrillers/espionage' (e.g. Aniruddha Bahal, Tarun Tejpal), the new generation of Indian English writers of fiction are showing interest in domestic science fiction (e.g. Amit Basu), Indian myth and fantasy (e.g. Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker), graphic novels (e.g. Amruta Patil, Vishwajyoti Ghosh), 'chick lit', 'film lit' etc. The trajectories of these new writers intersect with history and Independence at some points.

### **Indian Writing in English Translation**

The register **'Bhasha'** instead of 'vernacular'—deemed to have stood in oppositional terms to colonial imprint—is embedded in the spirit of Independence because it is rooted in the local identities, histories, stories and myths which were deemed dangerous to 'civilizing mission' and were erased during the colonial regime. In this age of 'reverse colonization', 'comparative studies' and 'literatures without borders', Translation is of immense importance because it breaks the barriers globally and serves as crucial bridge to reach out to a readership wider in scope than that of English. 'Translation' transcends the narrow boundaries of language and gives a new lease of life to the original 'Bhasha' text. It is an important means of 'decolonizing the mind' – an aspect not ensured by mere political Independence. The scope of Indian writing in English has been expanded through reciprocities with Indian 'Bhasha' Literatures (both original and translation) and there is little justification in privileging English as a distinct and more cosmopolitan language than the 'Bhashas' because this attitude obscures myriad interlingual histories. The importance of Translation has been stressed by the makers of Indian Writing in English. For example, Raja Rao in his *Foreword to Kanthapura* said, 'we are instinctively bilingual'. Anand and Ahmed Ali were both affiliated with the All-India Progressive Writers' Association (AIPWA), which brought together authors writing in a range of languages, including Sajjad Zaheer in Urdu and Premchand in Hindi. A. K. Ramanujan, to cite another example, says that he does not know at what point of time his Tamil and Kannada stop and his English language begins. The fact that many of the Indian English writers are conditioned by bilingualism or trilingualism and that creativity is a complex process which tends to blur the line of demarcation between a writer's allegiance to the mother tongue and to the language of intellectual

make-up speaks volumes for the inalienability of 'Indian Writing in English' from 'Indian Writing in English Translation'. In fact, India's modern written 'Bhashas' which are claimed by some to have remained 'authentic' and 'unsullied', have emerged in the very crucible of colonial modernity that was, in India, polyglossic. The Indian novel had its more spectacular start in the 'Bhashas' than in English. Many recent writers in 'Bhasha' literatures have been at least partially translated into English. A lot of writers today are writing in their mother tongue and are translating into English and vice versa. Sahitya Akademi and the Central Institutes of Languages have been playing a very significant role in this regard. The emergence of Dalit Literature bears testimony to the fact that Translation can be a potent weapon to counter cultural violence and that Translation can help preserve some endangered linguistic resources in which little, unrecorded histories remain enshrined. Despite its claim to have emerged in a distinct sphere of its own in the 'Bhashas' in opposition to nationalist/socialist Indian literature (including Indian Writing in English), Dalit literature (with some texts originally written in English, some translated into English as well as into languages other than their SL) is constantly in dialogue with the mainstream. Abstracts of original, academic research articles **written in English** are invited for the forthcoming volume 16 2023 with the focus on 'Celebration of 75 years of Indian Independence' keeping in mind the time line of 150 years from 1872 to 2022 (75 years on both sides of 1947).

**The sub-themes of the thrust area may include but are not limited to the following:**

- Decolonizing English Studies
- Partition Literature : (re)construction of history
- Independence and the role of women in literature
- Emergency, Secularism, Terrorism vis-a-vis Indian Independence
- Independence, nation-making and Subalternity
- Independence and the Literature of the North-east
- 'National allegories' vis-a-vis 'little narratives'
- Neo-colonialism, Neo-liberalism and Indian Independence
- Theme of Independence in Bhasha Literatures
- Independence and linguistic freedom
- Translation and the Nation-formation
- Translation in India as Postcolonial Strategy of resistance and recovery

N.B. The journal also welcomes reviews of books on the chosen area- published in recent times, along with the permission of the copyright holder / legal heir, in less than 1500 words for publication as well as translations of Bhasha literature into English (within 1500 words), along with the permission of the copyright holder/ legal heir.

**Timeline & instructions:**

Last date of submission of Abstracts: **09.05.2022**

Date of communication of selected Abstracts: **23.05.2022**

Last Date of submission of papers with Declaration & Bio note: **30.06.2022**

Submission Guidelines: 7<sup>th</sup> edition of MLA handbook. Papers will be summarily rejected if not submitted as per the guidelines. **Font type & size - Times New Roman, 12 point**

**Email address for submission (electronic version only): [editor\\_english@mail.vidyasagar.ac.in](mailto:editor_english@mail.vidyasagar.ac.in)**

**Word-limit: abstract: 300 (maximum) , keywords: not more than 6 & FINAL paper: Should be IN THE RANGE OF 5000-7000 words .**