



Romanticism in Kylas Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* (1835)

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Abstract

Kylas Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* is a remarkable early work of Indian English fiction that combines political imagination with literary experimentation. The narrative is generally interpreted as a pioneering nationalist text that anticipates later anti-colonial writing in India. However, beyond its overt political themes, the text also reveals subtle Romantic elements that enrich its narrative texture. This paper explores the presence of Romanticism in Dutt's narrative, focusing on the role of imagination, emotional intensity, and the aesthetic representation of nature. Through close textual reading, the study demonstrates how Romantic imagery and sentiment operate alongside themes of colonial resistance and national identity. The paper argues that the Romantic dimension of the narrative deepens the emotional resonance of the revolutionary storyline and provides an imaginative framework for articulating nationalist aspiration. By examining these Romantic elements, the research attempts to offer a new perspective on Dutt's narrative and situates it within both Romantic literary tradition and the early history of Indian English literature.

Keywords: Romanticism, nationalism, colonialism, Indian English literature, resistance, imagination, nature

Introduction

The nineteenth century represents an important transitional moment in the development of Indian writing in English. During this period, English education and colonial institutions created a new intellectual environment in which Indian writers began to experiment with English as a literary

language. As a result, early Indian English literature reflects a complex interaction between colonial influence and indigenous cultural consciousness. Writers of the period addressed issues such as identity, nationalism, social reform, and cultural transformation. These themes were closely connected with the socio-political realities of colonial India and the emerging desire for national self-assertion.

Several important literary figures contributed to shaping the early phase of Indian English writing. Authors such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ramesh Chandra Dutt, Toru Dutt, and Kylas Chunder Dutt played significant roles in exploring new literary forms and themes in English. Their works often reflect the intellectual ferment of the nineteenth century and reveal the tension between colonial modernity and indigenous cultural identity.

Among these writers, Kylas Chunder Dutt occupies a particularly interesting position. Born in 1817, he wrote at a time when Indian authors were only beginning to experiment with English prose fiction. His short narrative *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945*, first published in 1835 in *The Calcutta Literary Gazette*, imagines a fictional rebellion against British colonial rule. Because of this imaginative projection of future political resistance, the narrative is frequently considered one of the earliest expressions of nationalist imagination in Indian English literature.

Most discussions of Dutt's narrative focus primarily on its political and historical significance. The story presents themes of anti-imperial resistance, colonial oppression, and the desire for national liberation. However, the narrative also contains another dimension that has received relatively little critical attention, its Romantic sensibility. The text includes poetic descriptions of nature, emotional reflections of the protagonist, and imaginative visions of freedom. These characteristics suggest that Romantic literary influence plays a significant role in shaping the narrative structure and tone of the work.

This paper therefore attempts to examine the Romantic elements present in *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945*. By analyzing imagery, emotional expression, and imaginative language within the text, the study seeks to demonstrate that Romanticism contributes significantly to the narrative's aesthetic and ideological structure.

Literature Review

Scholarly attention to Kylas Chunder Dutt's work has increased in recent decades as researchers have begun to reassess the origins of Indian English fiction. Earlier literary histories often overlooked Dutt's contributions, focusing instead on later nineteenth-century writers. However, recent scholarship has recognized the importance of his narrative in the early formation of Indian English prose fiction.

Somdatta Mandal's edited edition of *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* has played a crucial role in recovering the text for contemporary readers. By republishing the narrative and providing critical commentary, Mandal has helped establish Dutt's importance within the history of Indian English literature. Similarly, scholars such as Alex Tickell and Subhendu Mund have examined the narrative in relation to colonial politics and early nationalist discourse.

Paromita Sengupta interprets the text as an expression of subaltern resistance and emphasizes how the narrative gives voice to anti-colonial consciousness. Sajal Kumar Bhattacharya also acknowledges the literary significance of the text and describes it as an important precursor to later developments in Indian English fiction.

While these studies emphasize the political and historical aspects of Dutt's work, relatively little attention has been given to the Romantic qualities present in the narrative. Romanticism emerged in Europe during the late eighteenth century as a reaction against the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the social transformations brought about by industrialization. Romantic writers emphasized imagination, emotional depth, and the beauty of nature. Their works often celebrated individual experience and the power of creative vision.

Although Romanticism originated in Europe, its influence spread across the world through colonial education and literary exchange. Indian writers exposed to English literature encountered Romantic poetry and prose, which inevitably shaped their own literary imagination. Therefore, examining Romantic elements in Dutt's narrative can provide valuable insights into the cultural and literary interactions that shaped early Indian English writing.

Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach based on close textual analysis. The narrative of *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* is examined in detail in order to identify Romantic elements within its descriptive passages, emotional tone, and narrative imagery. The research also situates the text within its historical context, considering the intellectual and cultural environment of nineteenth-century colonial India.

In addition to Romantic literary theory, the study also draws upon insights from postcolonial criticism. By combining these perspectives, the research aims to understand how Romantic aesthetics and nationalist politics coexist within the narrative. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a more nuanced interpretation of Dutt's work and highlights the complexity of early Indian English literature.

Analysis

The narrative of *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945* is structured as a diary that records the experiences of the protagonist Bhoobun Mohun during a period of revolutionary upheaval. The journal form creates an immediate and personal tone, allowing readers to follow the protagonist's emotional responses to unfolding political events. The story depicts a fictional uprising against British colonial authority and reflects the growing dissatisfaction with colonial rule among Indians.

Although the political dimension of the narrative is unmistakable, the text also contains passages that reveal a Romantic appreciation of nature. One of the most striking examples appears in the description of an evening landscape surrounding the city of Calcutta. The narrator writes:

“It was a beautiful evening; the hues of the setting sun, the whisper of breezes and the singing of birds made the whole scene delightful. Instead of lounging about the streets, as is generally the case, the rich and poor all huddled in the same direction. At about six a vast number of men assembled on the North Eastern suburbs of the ‘City of Palaces’. On the left of this spacious plain gurgles a rill, on the right it is fenced by avenues of bamboos. The front view is bounded by a beautiful Pagoda... Within this inclosure, all was lovely, the tumultuous dashing of the waters, the

hollow murmurs of the winds, and the confused melody of singing birds and human voices made it inexpressibly enchanting.”

This passage demonstrates Dutt’s ability to create vivid imagery through sensory description. The visual imagery of the sunset, the auditory imagery of birds and wind, and the tactile sense of gentle breeze together create a harmonious natural scene. Such detailed representation of nature strongly reflects Romantic aesthetics, which emphasize emotional and sensory engagement with the natural world.

Another passage from the narrative also reflects Romantic sensitivity. When the second day begins, the author writes:

“The dawn of morning roused Bhoobun Mohun, and its light was scarcely abroad in the azure heavens when a gentle rap at the door of his dwelling announced some friendly visitors.”

The poetic description of dawn and the “azure heavens” again demonstrates Romantic imagery. The use of light, colour, and atmosphere evokes a sense of calm beauty that contrasts sharply with the political turmoil described elsewhere in the narrative.

These Romantic descriptions serve an important symbolic purpose. By depicting the beauty and serenity of nature, Dutt highlights the contrast between natural harmony and colonial oppression. The peaceful landscape symbolizes an ideal state of freedom and unity, while colonial domination represents disruption and injustice. In this sense, Romantic imagery becomes a subtle vehicle for expressing nationalist sentiment.

Findings and Interpretation

The analysis reveals that Romantic elements are deeply embedded within the narrative structure of Dutt’s work. The author employs imagery, emotional expression, and imaginative description to create a powerful atmosphere that complements the political themes of the story.

Romanticism in the narrative functions in several ways. First, it intensifies the emotional impact of the revolutionary storyline by emphasizing the protagonist’s feelings and reflections. Second, it

creates symbolic contrasts between natural beauty and colonial oppression. Finally, it provides an imaginative framework through which the idea of national freedom can be articulated.

Conclusion

This study has examined the presence of Romanticism in Kylas Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of Forty-Eight Hours of the Year 1945*. Through close textual analysis, the research demonstrates that Romantic imagery, emotional intensity, and imaginative description play an important role in shaping the narrative's literary character. Although the story is primarily concerned with colonial resistance and nationalist aspiration, Romantic elements enrich its emotional and symbolic dimensions.

The study therefore suggests that Dutt's narrative represents an intersection between Romantic literary tradition and early Indian nationalist writing. Recognizing this Romantic dimension allows us to appreciate the narrative not only as a political text but also as a work of literary imagination. Such an approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the origins and development of Indian English literature.



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