

The Living Indian Critical Tradition Vivek Dwivedi

This paper attempts to establish the identity of something that is often considered to be missing – a living Indian critical tradition. I refer to the tradition that arises out of the work of those Indians who write in English. The chief architects of this tradition are Sri Aurobindo, C.D. Narasimhaiah, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha. It is possible to believe that Indian literary theories derive almost solely from ancient Sanskrit poetics.¹ Or, alternatively, one can be concerned about the sad state of affairs regarding Indian literary theories or criticism in English. There have been scholars who have raised the question of the pathetic state of Indian scholarship in English and have even come up with some positive suggestions.² But these scholars are those who are ignorant about the living Indian critical tradition. The significance of the Indian critical tradition lies in the fact that it provides the real focus to the Indian critical scene. Without an awareness of this tradition Indian literary scholarship (which is quite a different thing from Indian literary criticism and theory as it does not have the same impact as the latter two do) can easily fail to see who the real Indian literary critics and theorists are.

The difference between the critical tradition as it exists in India and those that have emerged in America and Australia (if they have emerged as traditions at all) is that in India it grows out of a nationalistic need to try to stand up against the West. India has long lived with the idea of an ancient glorious past, which might well be described as the high mark of Eastern culture. In the other two countries there has been a lesser resistance against imperialistic intrusions into their native cultures. India's own voice has tended to speak through its critical writing in a more manifest form than has America's or Australia's. This voice has resulted from the desire to stand by its own tradition rather than merge too easily with the other. In claiming this I do not say that India's critical tradition is in any way superior to the critical traditions of other nations. I merely suggest that India has gone a little further on the path of cultural segregation. As a result, it can boast of a living critical tradition that is not only different, but also distinct.

By and large, it is felt that the right-minded, genuine, healthy approach in critical practice is the one that looks back at least in some measure to Bharata, Abhinavgupta, Mammata, Anandavardhana and others all belonging to India's glorious past. Nothing really meaningful is generally believed to have happened on the Indian theoretical scene beyond these ancient masters. Later Indian critical theories have been considered scarcely more than extensions of these early theories. A

¹ Though this view is probably more imaginary than real, critics even of the stature of C.D. Narasimhaiah have sometimes tended to subscribe to it, at least in part. See for instance his essay, 'The Function of Criticism in India at the Present Time,' *The Function of Criticism in India at the Present Time* (Mysore: Central Institute of Foreign Languages, 1986) 14.

² See for instance, (a) M. S. Kushwaha, 'Preface', *Indian Poetics and Western Thought* ed. M. S. Kushwaha (Lucknow: Argo Publishing House, 1988) vi; (b) M. S. Kushwaha, 'The Unheard Voice: An Apology for Indian Literary Criticism in English', *Dialogue: A Journal Devoted to Literary Appreciation* (3.2 December 2007) 2-13. This second article is one that could be described as a 'must read' for anyone who desires to work on Indian literary criticism.

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few Indian literary scholars, even in the last few decades, have been orthodox and have resisted the use of Western critical methods in their literary criticism. But such an attitude is definitely not free from naiveté and imprudence. Any Indian theorist worth the name has to be conscious of the rich heritage of ancient India's theoretical past, no doubt. But to believe that this alone is the beginning and end of our literary and intellectual inspiration is to give a somewhat negative picture to our theoretical system. If the West had little more than Plato and Aristotle to grow from, it would not have achieved the complex and rich accomplishments that it actually has. Similarly, our own most influential recent and contemporary theories have not emerged from our ancient masters alone.

It cannot be denied that India's ancient past does have some bearing upon Indian literary theories of today. But since the past century, there has been another side to our theories, which has helped in the formation of a living Indian critical tradition, and this has come from the theories of Indians writing in English. This tradition has its anchor in opposition to the West. It has resulted from a voice of dissent, a refusal to be derivative or merely imitative. It has emerged in opposition to Western, and largely British, imperialism and colonialism. Even those theorists who have not been directly affected by postcolonialism have written with a desire to inform the West about what it has lacked or where it has gone wrong, or simply how it needs to be complemented by India's different kinds of knowledge. It gets its life and breath from giving to the West what seems to be lacking in the West's understanding of itself and of the rest of the world. This can be seen in a statement made in one of Sri Aurobindo's letters, dated October 10, 1932:

Even now and even where it is the external, everyday obvious that is being taken as theme, we see often enough that what the mind is trying to find is some recondite, previous or quintessential aspect of the everyday and obvious – something in it exceptional or esoteric. *But while in the East, the way to do it is known, the West does not seem yet to have found it.* Instead of going inside, getting intimate with what is behind, and writing of the outside also from that inside experience, they are still trying to stare through the surface into the inner depths with the X-ray of mental imagination or 'intuition' and the result is not the quintessence itself but a shadow picture of the quintessence.³
[Emphasis mine].

Because of the colonial history that they have in their mind, Indians writing in English have very often tried not to forget their rich traditional past. But more than that, they have risen to the occasion to give their very own theories to the West. They have absorbed a great deal from Western theories no doubt, perhaps infinitely more than from their own ancient theories, but they have not allowed these theories to sweep them off their feet. Indian theorists have tended to confront the West squarely, and to put before it whatever has seemed wrong with the perceptions of the West. It can be argued that the West has been behind the new spirit, or tradition, that has

³ Sri Aurobindo, 'Modern Poetry', *Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) 152-53.

emerged in Indian critical theories since Sri Aurobindo. It is in reaction to the West that the Indian critical tradition has been reborn in its new avatar. Indians have suffered an anxiety of not having a sufficiently critical sensibility. It is a harsh reality, the consciousness of the fact that we have been deficient in critical theory and criticism in the last few centuries. The anxiety makes the Indian mind look for ways of overcoming it. But first there is the necessity of acknowledging the deficiency. Sri Aurobindo begins his magnum opus, *The Future Poetry*, with the observation that the Indian mind is not as critical as the Western: 'It is not often that we see published in India literary criticism that is of the first order, at once discerning and suggestive, criticism that forces us both to see and think.'⁴ By the time Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak comes to the scene the situation has begun to be different. But there is still the desire to expose what is shockingly wrong in the West's attitude towards India and the Third World. Spivak's impressive formulation on the Indian subaltern's inability to speak can also be traced back to the kind of anxiety that lay in Aurobindo's mind when he felt that Indians were critically deficient. In *Boundary 2*, Spivak gives a glimpse of this anxiety in her own life when she joined Cornell University, USA for her PhD at the age of nineteen: 'For most, I was a piece of exotica, the proverbial monkey that could speak Latin.'⁵

It should not be presumed that the four theorists whom this paper examines are similar to one another. They are indeed very different from one another. Though Spivak and Bhabha can be considered to belong to a certain category, even they have significant differences between them. Sri Aurobindo, it may appear to some, is almost the kind of critic that Spivak would probably like to do away with (though the mistakenness of this belief can be seen in the next paragraph of this paper). I make such a conjecture on the ground that her theories are as different from Sri Aurobindo's as they possibly can be; hers have social concerns behind them whereas Aurobindo's have spiritual ones. Sri Aurobindo belongs to an earlier generation, and speaks in a language of absolutes, as his contemporaries did, without the knowledge of post-structuralist thought; Spivak and Bhabha speak as post-structuralists for whom nothing can be taken for granted, and essentialism or monolithic meaning are myths. Narasimhaiah is a bridge between these two antipodal positions. Therefore, for anyone who would write on the Indian critical tradition, Narasimhaiah is of vital importance.

However, Spivak has an admirable kind of negative capability in her critical vision. She can, in spite of her basic claims, see the positive side of a theorist like Sri Aurobindo. She describes Sri Aurobindo's response to the *Gītā* (in his *Essays on the Gītā* written in 1916) as a 'meditative text by the celebrated nationalist-activist turned sage, Aurobindo Ghose'.⁶ The fact that Spivak quotes a large passage from Sri Aurobindo's text and describes him, or his text, with the help of adjectives and nouns such as 'meditative', 'celebrated', 'nationalist', 'activist' and 'sage', indicates that she has a rather positive image of Sri Aurobindo as an overall personality.

⁴ Sri Aurobindo, 'The Mantra' *The Future Poetry* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1997) 3.

⁵ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Learning from de Man: Looking Back', *Boundary 2* (32.3 Fall 2005) 26.

⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Philosophy', *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1999) 62.

Yet, different as Spivak is from Aurobindo, she too talks as an Indian again and again. For her everything, more often than not, must either begin or end in India or Indian experience. A statement like the following is not uncommon in Spivak's writings:

Because I am Indian and was born a Hindu, I will also attempt to satisfy the increasing, and on occasion somewhat dubious, demand that ethnics speak for themselves, by focusing on a bit in Hegel on Indian poetry. The native-informant/postcolonial here is affected as a centrally interpellated voice from the margin.⁷

There are some features that these four theorists share in spite of the major differences that inform their work. What they share in, can be seen in: (a) an anti-imperialistic attitude, (b) a consciousness of Nationalism, (c) a belief that the East and the West are insufficient by themselves, and the possibility of the two coming to a more holistic view when each complements the other, and (d) that the colonising nation, or the powerful West, has been wrong-minded and needs to be corrected.

Each of these theorists, if rather different from one another in his or her basic approach, is yet not only conscious of being an Indian nationalist but has faith in the force of nationalism itself. This tendency sometimes takes on a slightly different shape when these theorists do not regard the erstwhile colonising country (Britain, in this case) as the only Other of their own nationalistic situation. Aurobindo, for instance, talks of the poetry and literature of several European countries, along with America, and there is a desire in him to talk of these not only as Western critics had done before him, but as an Indian trying to inform the West of what it has missed. He evaluates poets of the West and reevaluates them using Indian standpoints like the Mantra. Even a general statement in a letter, written by Sri Aurobindo on 2 February 1936, would indicate this nationalistic attitude: 'Many Indians write better English than many educated Englishmen.'⁸

Narasimhaiah is much more aggressive towards the West and works with a missionary zeal in trying to set the balance right wherever it is tilted in favour of the colonising nation. He, like Aurobindo, assimilates what he considers right both in the West and in India and comes down heavily on anyone who has not seen the Indian or the 'Other' point of view – the point of view of the countries once under British rule and now writing without imperialistic interference. The most significant part of Narasimhaiah's criticism lies in his anti-imperialistic temper and his postcolonial concerns.

Spivak has written a great deal with the woman of Bengal in mind and has questioned Western feminism for lumping together the issues of all women, irrespective of whether they belong to the First or the Third World. She has argued with Western theorists to the extent that she has invited the wrath of certain Western critics, like Terry Eagleton. She has continued to argue against Western modes of interference with the Third World even till now. Her tirade against the West's concern

⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Philosophy', *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1999) 40.

⁸ Sri Aurobindo, 'Indo-English Poetry', *Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) 165.

for Human Rights and cultural representation is very effective and interesting. She sees the Human Rights movement as a contemporary replacement of the erstwhile colonial discourse that had pretensions of civilising the colonised subjects.

Bhabha is perhaps one of the most effective theorists on culture and nationalism. His and Spivak's theories on these subjects have actually affected the West in a big way. His writings could be seen as constituting one of the strongest oppositions to colonialist ideologies that have prevailed in the West.

A noteworthy feature of the tradition of Indian critical theories in English is that in this tradition there is centrality accorded to the sense of justice. In the case of Spivak, and Bhabha this sense of justice is more of a social nature, and in Narasimhaiah it is again somewhat so. But in Aurobindo this sense of justice seems to be bypassed and replaced by the needs of the spirit or the soul. In the case of Aurobindo, the social cause seems to be strikingly missing. It is probably contained in its absence. For, Sri Aurobindo seems to suggest that the poet is not a great one if he depends on a social vision. Instead of going outward to society, he should look inwards to his soul to get his message.⁹ Thus Aurobindo can be considered as one who believes in a different function of literature – a spiritual one – that could provide an escape from society instead of highlighting its social problems and injustices. However, instead of social, Aurobindo's mind captures nationalistic strains in poetry. He does not approve of the historical approach to literature, which seems to reduce a poem to its historical conditions.¹⁰ However, to consider Aurobindo merely a formalistic critic is to see him entirely wrongly. He does give tremendous importance to literary devices like 'mantra' but these devices are ultimately subservient to the spiritual content that poetry is supposed to embody. This truth of poetry is supposed to help people in society ultimately. Thus like religion, poetry is supposed to support life. In this respect Aurobindo is the closest of the four theorists to the ancient Indian tradition of literature. Narasimhaiah comes after Sri Aurobindo in this regard, and these two are rather different from the other group, of Spivak and Bhabha, who never suggest any spiritual functions for literature. For them the real fight is against the colonial discourses and colonialist governmental authorities that deprive people of the right to think independently. Narasimhaiah does come close to Spivak and Bhabha at times in his obsession to dispel anti-imperial modes of thinking and get closer to the question of the real Indian or the real native voices. Narasimhaiah can be seen as a bridge between Sri Aurobindo on the one hand and Spivak and Bhabha on the other.

Indian critical theories in English are few in comparison to critical theories in the West. Those that exist may be divided into two rough categories. The first is that which has a clear Indian past, growing out as it were of Indian poetics and having a patchwork of Western ideas. The aim of these theories, however, has not been to aid the Indian alone but to make the Western reader conscious of what he has been missing. The best example of this is the work of Sri Aurobindo. C. D. Narasimhaiah's critical practice provides a theoretical framework that may be considered a close second to Sri Aurobindo in this category of Indian critical theories. The second

⁹ See, for instance, Sri Aurobindo, 'The National Evolution of Poetry,' *The Future Poetry*, 41-47, where he thinks of the Nation instead of society that can provide that need which later authors would find fulfilled by society.

¹⁰ Sri Aurobindo, 'The National Evolution of Poetry,' *The Future Poetry*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1997) 41-47

category of Indian theories in English (namely the postcolonial Indian theorists) is one in which the ancient Indian tradition is significantly absent because they emanate almost entirely from contemporary Western theories. But these theorists have retained a clear Indian identity and pursued Indian interests. These theorists seem to have made up their minds that the past of Indian aesthetics has more historical than real relevance and hence they decided to plunge headlong into contemporary Western oppositional theories, making these the sole base for their own theoretical assumptions and frameworks. These emerge out of the critical thought of post-structural and oppositional theories as well as the postcolonial ideas of Edward Said. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha are the Indian theorists in question (Edward Said may not have considered himself a pure occidental, but his method and approach is nothing other than what may be described as Western. He has used Western tools to deconstruct the West). The chief reason for labelling this second group of theorists as Indian is that they were born in India and have battled for an Indian viewpoint using significant illustrations from Indian history and literatures. Even if these Indians have left their home country for purposes of residence and have accepted the West as the anchor and mainstay of their critical thought, they have the interest of the home country or the Third World still haunting them. This second category of theories is still Indian, though in a different way, and the West has tended to show some reaction toward them, not considering them exactly their own in spite of the fact that their theories have clear Western origins. The basic feature of Indian critical theories in English can be said to lie in the fact that all of them have some elements of both – that which is Indian and that which is Western. It may seem, at the face of it that the theories of someone like Sri Aurobindo or C.D. Narasimhaiah are purely Indian but that does not turn out to be true when these theories are examined. In every case, Indian theories in English have some element of hybridity. And in the case of the four theorists who have been dealt with in this paper, each has largely written to inform the West regarding something that has emerged from India or at least pertains to India. Each of these four theorists can be seen as trying either to complement Western theories or oppose them.

The chief authors of the first category, that is authors who have their feet steadfastly planted in Indian theory, are Sri Aurobindo and C.D. Narasimhaiah. There are of course others such as Rabindra Nath Tagore, Amaranatha Jha, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, S.C. Sen Gupta, V.Y. Katak and Krishna Rayan who have made significant statements on critical and literary matters, even though they may not have written as momentously and as copiously as the first two. Some of the ideas proposed by the latter two mentioned authors are of the highest importance. But when seen diachronically they do not emerge quite as significant as Sri Aurobindo and C.D. Narasimhaiah. Similarly there are some others in the second category like Gauri Vishwanathan, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee who base their critical ideas on Western thought and yet do not come up to the stature of Spivak and Bhabha. This paper has focused on Sri Aurobindo, C.D. Narasimhaiah, Gayatri Chakravorty and Homi Bhabha because these four have emerged as the most representative of the Indian theorists in English. The other authors cannot be awarded the same space in this paper as the basic four. Just as A.C. Bradley singles out four tragedies (seeing them as a distinct group) in his monumental work *Shakespearean Tragedy*, leaving out such major works as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet* even though

these latter plays are excellent tragedies, similarly this paper sets aside the work of several Indian theorists in spite of their tremendous importance. The focus of this paper lies on those authors who have significant and substantial theoretical work attached to their names rather than those Indians who have devoted themselves merely to critical practice, reaching the domains of theory only rarely. Those who have written no more than a few articles on theory cannot be given the same space in this paper.

Another reason for grouping the four authors in this paper together is that these four have anti-imperialist stances, if not full-fledged leanings, towards postcolonial theory. When Sri Aurobindo writes *The Future Poetry* he is already writing with a consciousness that he is different from the Western, particularly British, intellectual. He writes quite distinctly like an Indian. Here is an example: ‘What you say may be correct (that our oriental luxury in poetry makes it unappealing to Westerners), but on the other hand it is possible that the mind of the future will be more international than it is now.’¹¹ (This supposition has come true.) Similarly, in Narasimhaiah there is a forceful reaction to the West. One of his missions as a critic seems to be to set things right in India’s favour. Hence the main thrust of Indian theorists in English has been to write differently from the West in spite of the fact that they have had tremendous respect for Western theories.

Indians in general seem to have been more accepting and less critical. As a result Indian critical theories seem to have come to a stop after the ancient stimulus to write theories was over. There has been something of a vacuum between the time when Sanskrit poetics came into existence and the last century when the Indian mind began to get back its critical ambitions. The literary theories of Sri Aurobindo have come about after a distressingly long gap, a virtual amnesia of critical thought in India. After Anand Vardhana and Abhinavagupta there was virtually nothing that could be called really original or said to be dynamic enough in literary matters. Sanskrit poetics may have been great but it seems to have had a classical fixity because of which it has remained closed ended rather than open to change. This second phase of Indian critical resurgence seems to have coincided with the impact of English or Western influence on the Indian mind. This paper can also be looked upon as a statement on the revival of the critical spirit in India. The revival can be studied systematically by studying the work of Indian theorists in English.

In the process of putting these theories together some significant facts about Indian critical thought (in general) have emerged. One fact that seems to have come to the surface is that exposure to Western literature, philosophy and criticism has made Indians more critical. Most of the authors discussed here are Indians who have not only read English and other Western authors but have lived in the West for extended spells of time, or are living in the West after having acquired citizenship of a western country.

One of the significant characteristics of Indian critical theorists in English has been that they have tended to be postcolonial in nature (even if they have, as in the early cases, not used this term), and this is a point that has been missed out by most scholars. The term ‘anti-imperialism’ and the consciousness of a Commonwealth

¹¹ Sri Aurobindo, ‘Indo-English Poetry’, *Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972) 165.

Literature have often subsumed much of what has gone on in the name of 'Post-colonialism'. P.K. Rajan, whose work could be considered valuable in this field, seems to have missed out this fact entirely; M.K. Naik¹² has also said nothing about this feature of Indian theories in English even though he has written so much on Indians writing in English. The same is true of the rest of the scholars in general who have written on this subject. Harish Trivedi and Makrand Paranjape are two of the very few Indian critics who do make a distinction (even though that is all that they do) between the terms 'Post-colonial' and 'Commonwealth.'¹³ However, what these scholars miss out is the fact that the one who best saw this distinction was C.D. Narasimhaiah. Narasimhaiah always worked in the spirit of an anti-imperialist but he was very careful in using the term 'Post-colonial'. He was a crusader for the cause of Commonwealth Literature in India and acquired the image of a father figure for it, but he was never tempted into using a terminology that he did not feel upon his pulses. Had he done that he would probably have remained limited to the extent of a scholar. But he acquired the status of a critic only because he used his critical terms very carefully. Lakshmi Raj Sharma has suggested some distinctions between scholars and critics and having done that, has referred to Narasimhaiah as a critic.¹⁴ It can be pointed out in unambiguous terms that C.D. Narasimhaiah stands between Sri Aurobindo on the one hand and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on the other in an extremely key position as an Indian critic. Narasimhaiah can be justifiably described as an (Indian) Edward Said. The anti-imperialist spirit in which he writes and the striving away from Western criteria and Western points of view make his work resemble Said's considerably. If Narasimhaiah has not received the same attention from either the West or even from India, the reason for this failing can best be arrived at with the help of Said's theory of Orientalism. The West has predetermined ways of understanding or appreciating the East and the East has generally followed the West slavishly in coming to terms with itself. It would take a Western scholar to discover the Said in Narasimhaiah, if the crown that adorns Said's head is to be shared between him and Narasimhaiah.

The reason for this injustice can be found out by examining the nature of the politics of Indian critical theories in English. The presence of politics in theory is a rather natural phenomenon. I do not use the word 'politics' in its derogatory sense, if there is at all a derogatory connotation of politics. Wherever there is human activity, there will be politics. The struggle for power and supremacy is a healthy sign that has been responsible for much human progress and growth. But politicisation must not be confused with politics. The politicisation of literary theory can lead to the fading out of some basic truths of literature and criticism. It can raise one aspect and suppress another.

¹² See books of M.K. Naik such as (a) *Aspects of Indian Writing in English: Essays in Honour of Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1979); (b) *A Critical Harvest: Essays and Studies* (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2005); (c) *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* (New York: Advent Books/Stosius Inc., 1984); (d) *A History of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982).

¹³ Makrand Paranjape, *Interrogating Post-colonialism: Theory Text and Context* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1996) 38-46.

¹⁴ Lakshmi Raj Sharma and Bandana Sharma, *The Twain Shall Meet: Indian Criticism and C.D. Narasimhaiah* (Allahabad: Silver Birch, 1998) 10-11.

The politics of Indian critical theories, like the politics of Indian nationalism in the last hundred years or so has generally been one of no real alignment. In fact it has been of non-alignment. It has been a politics of openness towards other theories and theoretical systems, and an acceptance for all but servile devotion towards none. Bhabha's term 'the politicisation of the means of representation'¹⁵ can be applied to Western or colonialist theories but not to our theories. One of the chief concerns which have been in the minds of Indian theorists in English is related to the question of representation. The Indian theorist has often felt that India's point of view has remained ignored. Or, to put it differently, the West has missed the Indian theoretical situation as it actually is. Therefore the voice of India has either not been heard or has been misunderstood and misrepresented. Spivak speaks of a 'native informant' or implied reader that seems to be missing in the discourses of our national as well as international scene. There has been a real effort right from the time of Sri Aurobindo, running through C.D. Narasimhaiah, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, to set things right for India as well as for the objectivity of critical theory in general.

Concluding this paper, I would like to raise a final point. Spivak and Bhabha have often not been included in critiques on Indian literary criticism. This has been unfortunate not only for them but also for Indian critical tradition. They may have settled abroad but they cannot be denied their Indian birth and identity. They have shown their Indianness in ways different from other literary critics who did not leave their country. The eminent literary scholar Rajnath has also made a note of this point:

A book dealing with English criticism or an anthology of Indian critical essays ought to cover all the Indian critics of different schools or persuasions. Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha are Indian critics settled in the metropolitan West. Far from drawing on the Indian critical heritage, they have used Western theories and critical tools to understand and assess literature, Western as well as Indian. But they should not be left out of any discussion of Indian English criticism.¹⁶

This paper has attempted to club together and view as a group the most significant theorists of India (irrespective of where they reside or what critical tools they employ), instead of segregating them into different entities and labelling them 'Western' or 'Indian' and defining a living Indian critical tradition that was never seen before.

One of the significant tasks that this paper has attempted to accomplish is to put together Spivak and Bhabha on the one hand and Aurobindo and Narasimhaiah on the other. Normally scholars have tended to exclude Spivak and Bhabha from Indian literary critics and treated them as though they belonged to the West. As a result the picture of the Indian critical scene has generally remained a gloomy one. But that has been unfair both to the two theorists as well as to the Indian critical tradition as a whole that emerges from this paper. This paper has tried to establish that although the texture and method of the theories of these four critics may be different, their general

¹⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 69.

¹⁶ Rajnath, 'Nation and Indian Criticism in English,' *Dialogue* (3.1 June 2007) 12.

spirit (of being the West's Other), their anti-imperialism and postcolonial outlook, their nationalistic temperament, etc. makes them largely of a piece. Thus in future studies in this field, Spivak and Bhabha should be seen as an integral part of the Indian critical tradition. Aurobindo should be regarded as one of the significant leaders of this tradition and Narasimhaiah should be looked upon as the bridge between them.