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Paper VIII
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Improvement of English in India from 19th century but especially in Bihar with special references of Bihari Universities. I like to focus writing, speaking and listening in English in Bihar. Indian Writing in English has always been attracting the readers of English Literature written by Indians. It has been an interesting endeavour. But when it comes to the writers of Bihar writing in English we find it difficult to find out none in particular with wide range of popularity. But the fact is that many Bihari writers have been contributing to Indian English Literature with their writings which very unfortunately, failed to catch the illuminating eyes.

At the very outset I dare to declare with honesty that it is a Herculean task to find single out the writers with outstanding works and highlighting their writings in English in Bihar is even more a complicated job. However I have tried to bring to the notice of the people the valuable gems of English writings which are hidden from their eyes.

It is remarkable that Dean Mahomed, a Bihari, was claimed to be the first writer in English. His Travels (completed on January 15, 1794) was the first book in English by an Indian. Dean Mahomed was by no means the only Bihari to have left his mark on Indian English literature. How can one forget 19th century writers like Avadh Behari Lall, as well as the fact that so many leading Indian English writers and critics today have had something to do with Bihar: Vikram Seth, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Shyamala Narayan. There are, of course, also a few contemporary or recent writers from Bihar who remain quite visible in the English-reading world: Amitava Kumar, Sidhartha Chowdhury, Indrani Aikath-Gyaltsen, and others. That all this is so often forgotten has much to do with the fact that there has been a lack of political will in Bihar to highlight its own literature and arts, and in particular the contributions of Biharis in English. They are the roots of Indian English and especially in some areas of Bihar improving gradually not rapidly.

Some days back I happened to read a good article published in The Hindu (Tuesday, Feb 12, 2008) bringing to our notice the annual status report on education. According to this report, school children in Bihar have been found doing better in English and Mathematics than students in other parts of the country. It is to be noted that the report was released by Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia in New Delhi. In order to dispel the inferiority complex from the mind of the people living in Bihar it deserves to be mentioned here that the first book in English by an Indian was written by a Bihari. This writer was none other than Dean Mahomed who was born in Patna in 1759. His "Travels" (completed on January 15, 1794) was the first book in English by an Indian.

But Dean Mahomed was not the only Bihari to have left his mark on Indian English literature. Bihar is the land which is proud to have produced one of the most remarkable English writers in

the form of George Orwell whose celebrated book "Animals Farm" needs no introduction . There are, of course, also a few contemporary or recent writers from Bihar who remain quite visible in the English-reading world. Among such Bihari writers writing in English Upamanyu Chatterjee, Amitava Kumar, Tabish Khair, Siddhartha Chowdhury, Indrani Aikath-Gyaltsen are the most remarkable literary figures who have greatly contributed to the Indian English Literature with their literary output and won the laurel as such.

Some of the prominent teachers who taught me and did a lot for arousing in me literary and linguistic taste in English language and literature when I was doing MA in English in Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga, are now teaching in most renowned universities and institutes of the country and abroad as well. Dr. Pashupati Jha is teaching in IIT Roorkee, and so is Dr. Binod Mishra. Another teacher Dr. Mukesh Ranjan Verma is the Head of Department of English in Gurukul Kangari University, Dr. Permanand Jha from C M College Darbhanga. Some, though they have retired, are earning name and fame abroad by teaching English. This is all about English teachers whom I know. Like them, there are definitely a large number of other competent and efficient teachers, unknown to me, who are fetching Bihar a great name and fame. I will write more about English writing in Bihar when I have a lot of information in terms of significant development in recognized way in Bihar.

The British Council is delighted to announce the publication of '**English in Education: Bihar Profile**', a comprehensive reference document on the teaching and learning of English within the general picture of education in the state and a 'snapshot' of current systems and practices at one specific moment in time, late November 2015. Part One of the profile presents statistics and other educational data on teaching and learning in the state, including the numbers of schools, teachers and learners, levels of learner performance and school facilities and resources. Educational systems and administrative organisation, the curriculum and coursebook, the place of examinations and the provision of teacher training are all described. There is a wide range of research on education in Bihar and the profile presents a summary of this research. Topics include the background of parents and learners, the relative effectiveness of teaching and training and the place of private and public education. Links to further reading on these topics are provided throughout. There are many challenges to effective teaching and learning in Bihar which are examined in the profile including one of the highest pupil-teacher ratios in India, significant shortage of teachers and a need for at least fourteen thousand new schools. However, the last decade has seen some dramatic changes in the number of students enrolled in the state (a ten per cent increase since 2006 means almost all children are now enrolled in school), in school infrastructure and in the gender parity index which is now higher than the national average, thanks partly to the Chief Minister's Bicycle Distribution Scheme which research indicates has led to a thirty per cent increase in the probability of girls' enrolment. While there has been plenty of research on education in Bihar, there has been far less on the teaching and learning of English in the state. Part Two of the profile presents data collected and analysed through the BLISS (**Bihar Language Initiative for Secondary Schools**) project, a collaboration between the British Council, DFID and the government of Bihar which has developed the skills of two hundred teacher educators and supported them in the delivery of training and professional development to over two thousand teachers. Data gathered through the project provides detail on aspects of English in Bihar which have hitherto been very

under-researched such as an analysis of typical class size in Bihar, identification of teacher language proficiency, current teaching practice and the impact of training on this practice and the access to and availability and use of information technology at secondary level in the state. Data shows that more than eighty percent of teacher educators trained through the BLISS project have made demonstrable progress in language proficiency and achievements in improving classroom practice are similarly impressive.

The profile has been developed in collaboration with Pratham and the profile incorporates findings from original research by the Pratham team on areas including educational policy, English in higher education and the role of commercial language schools in the delivery of English teaching.

A companion volume which will investigate social attitudes to English in Bihar is also in the course of preparation, with research led by Professor David Hayes of Brock University, Canada. Through providing the most up to date and reliable data and summaries of research available, the profile will serve as a foundation for decisions by policy makers and as a source of information for researchers, organisations and individuals planning to work in Bihar.

“We hope the Bihar Profile will be of use to head teachers, teacher educators and teachers working in the contexts it describes and, indeed, anyone with an interest in the complex, often challenging and rapidly changing picture of English and education in Bihar.”

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The British Council was established in India in 1948. The British Council is recognised across India for its network of 9 libraries and cultural centres. We offer a range of specialised projects in arts, education, exams, English language and society to audiences across India and more than 100,000 members. We also provide access to English language training and learning for both students and teachers, offer bihari qualifications in India and enable opportunities to study in Bihar. We use English language frequently in the world for different purposes but on the other hand, each and every state has its own language to communicate one another.