

Western writers in Native shelves

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Abstract

The article attempts to draw attention to the gush for publications in the West/by the West for academic pursuits of varied nature among our native learners. Irrespective of the nature of studies, be it be research or relatively minor assignment, the sources referred to is mostly the publications by foreign authors over the indigenous ones. Research scholars, academicians, teachers and students mostly look out for the books from the West for academic assistance. The lesser number of books by the native writers in the libraries of Universities in comparison to the books by Western writers is nothing less a proof to the scholarly content of superior quality believed to be existent in the Western works. Though people seem to less ponder over the reliability/dependence over the works from the West, it is far from denial that indigenous writers and their compositions have been treated gullible and lesser dependent. The factors mounting to the popularity of the Western works could have been assumed to be the monopoly of the West over the press in the colonial times but that cannot be held a factor of truth for the same situation in the publications of the current times. The independent status enjoyed by the nation today offers no support for relatively inferior status of the indigenous publications. The academic publications of the nation hold seconding position which is a major concern but lesser thought about. The native intelligentsia is nothing less on potential in comparison to the Western authors. They stand an equal footing. Yet, the dependence on the Western publications in large is rather intriguing and lesser understood. The article tries to draw attention to the threateningly inferior position held by the native publications in the native land.

Key words: academic books, Universities, scholarly attributes, Western vs. native publications

Being in the field of academics, there is one underlying factor which is noticeably felt about academic writing and academic books of our nation. Be it be the students of graduate courses and postgraduate courses of any discipline or the research scholars of either of the disciplines, the scholarly books by Western writers is sought or looked for to procure more knowledge or to look for authentic information on any topic. Well, it isn't intended to talk about the colonial practice of holding the Western knowledge superior and thus marginalizing or

belittling the knowledge produced in the East. The postcolonial reading of the phenomenon is not the concern.

The article tries to draw the attention to the problems of academic writing in a country like ours letting aside the suppressive agenda observed by the colonizers who enjoyed the monopoly of press and print media in the colonial and immediate post colonial times. While negating the postcolonial reading of the current scenario, the article doesn't lighten up the harm done to most of the academicians of noteworthy potential whose works went unpublished (probably most enlightening works) due to the suppressive colonial regime and consequently less of noteworthy publications by the periphery scholars in the archives. The focus of the article is intriguing position of academic books that does not carry the same standard as the books published in the West on the same topic. What is the aspect that absences the native publications in the libraries of Universities? And what are the factors that lead to the deficit subject content of the books despite enjoying the possession of print media and free access to information across the globe?

Factors affecting publications by natives occur to the mind as one is reminded of the book *The Story of Geopolitics in Academic Writing* by A Suresh Canagarajah. The book discusses the center and periphery scholars and the problems faced by the periphery scholars in procuring updated information and publication of any authentic findings without the intervention of Western powers. Few problems he discusses in the book are the problems such as delay in receiving calls or letters for papers presentation/publications in reputed journals (again, the journal of/by the West) and limited access to the latest information. The book examines the broad Western conventions governing academic writing and argues that their dominance leads to the marginalization or appropriation of the knowledge of Third world communities.

The book begins with the problem where the findings of the rest are brought to the light with undue acclaim to the role of Westerners in the findings and thus minimizing the role of the real perpetrator (most of the times, the people in the periphery). He cites a front-page headline of the New York Times of 25 April 1997 which triumphantly proclaims "*In China, a Spectacular Trove of Dinosaur Fossils is Found*" and the paragraphs followed providing a detailed account of the team of International Paleontologists' (specifically, Americans) and their journey in the discovery of the fossils. Very little reference of the Chinese farmer who had discovered it and who even knew the worth of his discovery towards was made in the concluding part. Apart from this, the book also mentions the importance given to the set of conventions followed by the West (observations to be recorded in a particular method) and hence a strangulating experience for a periphery writer to befit his writing obliging to the conventions to make it worthy of publication. Hence, A Suresh Canagarajah's book highlighting the problem of periphery scholars can be justified considering the detainment of findings by the Western powers then.

But, the academicians today do not face either of the earlier stated problems. Today's globalized world accords free and immediate access to the world wide information and neither scrutinizes or erases the subject content that resists the center. Neither are the scholars obliged to adopt the conventional writing of the West. Hence, the earlier problems that minimized the publications by the periphery scholars (scholars in India) cannot be stated or voiced by the

present day academicians for their publications in the dusty shelves of the libraries. What are the reasons for poor academic standards observed in the works published by our native writers? Is it the thirst to imitate the West which amounts to insignificant publication? Or is it something else? These unanswered questions are to receive the answers. The publications of most of the findings, discoveries, inventions etc. of any discipline across the globe is primarily in English since the language has gone global over the decades. There are publications in native languages as well on the discoveries and inventions, for most of them being the translations. The mentioning of translated works doesn't mean that the deficit in quality is due to translation. The deficit academic writing in English by natives is the subject of study. It is not the translated work in native languages but the books written in English by native writers on disciplines like psychology, commerce, criticism of literature and various others.

Hence the question of quality of academic writing and academic works narrow down to language. The language plays an important role when treated as a body of knowledge and information. The language adopted by the native writers for most of the disciplines, is undeniably English so as to reach across the global audience. But, the findings and theories in a discipline formulated by the native writers in English is either poorly established or poorly constructed and hence not well received by the immediate reader who is equally incapable of analyzing the content. The contention is the poor reading and writing skill of educated natives in India.

The curriculum of our country, with reference to the teaching-learning of language, doesn't lay focus on churning the reading and writing skills of the learners. There is little or no room for developing analytical and critical skills in the curriculum offered even at the tertiary level of learning. The teaching-learning of language at most of the Universities in our nation remains to be more focused on teacher conveying the prescribed content and thereby facilitating the understanding of the content for the learner. The assessment of the learner's understanding is the testing of the rote memory rather than the analyzing ability or critical receptivity of him/her. LSRW skills (Learning, Speaking, Reading & Writing), which one needs to develop through language classes, is far from being achieved for the focus today remains to be the Speaking/communication skills of the learner. Undoubtedly, a student must equip oneself with the communication skill to render oneself employable in the employability market. The current scenario where education is one's means to earn his/her bread and butter, there is no denial of cultivating a skill which is sought for in the employability market. But if the Universities place its prime concern on employment, then they no longer will remain the center for academic learning or an abode of knowledge. Hence, it is equally imperative for the Universities to provide a learner with a curriculum in language that develop his/her R & W skills. The acquisition of these skills are sought for so as to produce books which are well-framed and well-perceived. Or else, the University libraries will continue to home the glistening and most visited shelves for the books by the writers from the West and the works by the native writers in the dark and dusty corners of it. The abundant books by the Western writers in the Universities itself will imply the failure of the Universities in producing scholars of their own. The dependency on the books by the West and the writers in the West can only be limited by introducing the curriculum that provides quality space for developing analytical and critical skills of the learner. The acquisition

of language must entail churning of critical ability and analytical skills and not just enhancing communicative skills. Universities with enhanced learning atmosphere assure creation of competent authors with compositions of authenticity and reliability.

The academic standard of the Universities and the scholarly nature of publications share a mysteriously mutual relationship. Improvising one will improve the other inadvertently. There is a need to re-visit the curriculum of the courses offered at the Universities in secondary and tertiary level. An enhanced curriculum that develops all the four primary skills is hopeful of producing a native intelligentsia that will enhance the quality of the publications. The progress of the native intelligentsia with reference to the academic publications of scholarly content will boost the academic standard of the Universities within the nation.

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