

ABSTRACT

The Growth and Development of Indo-Trinidadian Literature 1850 to 1950

Krishendaye Rampersad

This thesis is about the growth and development of literature and a literary consciousness among Indo-Trinidadians in the century between 1850 and 1950. It interprets the literary evolution of a part of the Trinidad and Tobago society of Indian origin by looking in detail at twelve rare, little-known newspaper publications, periodicals and magazines that existed before writers began publishing novels, poems, short stories, plays and other creative works.

It examines the complexities that began to unfold with the meeting between the English of the island and the languages and literatures transported from India, and it shows how certain issues championed by the Press came to be recurring themes in the fictional literatures that were produced from the 1950s.

The study, therefore, corrects certain misconceptions about Indo-Trinidadian literature and presents its emergence not as something surprising, but as the product of more than one hundred years of gestation. The Indo-Trinidadian voice is believed to be one of the voices reduced to being a minor strain in the larger context of Caribbeanism/Trinidadianism, but given the demographic and political complexion of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, and recognising the emergence of Indo-Trinidadians like VS Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Neil Bissoondath, and Shani Mootoo, as West Indian writers, a clear understanding of Indo-Trinidadian Literature is necessary for studies of both West Indian Literature and West Indian societies. It therefore expands and enhances the vision of West Indian Literature with a closer understanding of Indo-Trinidadian Literature.

KEY WORDS: Literary evolution; 12 rare publications; meeting of languages;
Indo-Trinidadian Literature