

Toru Dutt (1856-1877)

Toru Dutt was one of the founding figures alongside Sarojini Naidu and Henry Derozio, of what was then called Anglo-Indian literature. Toru Dutt was born in a well-educated and affluent family of Kolkata. Dutt family was renowned for its progressive outlook and literary leanings. Her father was a noted linguist and a published poet writing in English while her mother was an intelligent woman with a literary bent of mind. In 1869, Toru Dutt moved to France along with her family, where she got an education in French, literature and music. By 1873, the family returned back to India. In India, Toru regularly contributed to the 'Poet's corner of The Bengal Magazine.

In her lifetime, Toru Dutt could only publish her first anthology of poems, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* in 1876 in which she translated french poems in English. She didn't get much attention for the volume until it came to the notice of Edmund goose who reviewed it quite favourably in The Examiner that year. The anthology got republished in 1878 and 1890, but sadly Dutt wasn't alive to witness this success.

Toru Dutt had command over many languages: Bangla, English, French, and Sanskrit. Most of her works were published posthumously. Besides poetry, Toru also left her only English Novel, Bianca, or *The young Spanish Maiden*, unfinished. *Bianca* was later published serially in The Bengal magazine from January to April 1878. Her french novel, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*,

was posthumously published in France in 1879. Her poems were later compiled and published in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*.

According to Edmund Goose, more than her lyrical writings, the compelling feature of her work was the fact that it came from an Indian woman in the nineteenth century. He admired the fact that Dutt had a remarkable knowledge of languages that she was not native to. He also commended the fact that she maintained her personal sweet disposition in her works, communicating her emotions effectively while never indulging in melodrama.