

The British imperialism, while it changed the physical landscape of the Punjab in many ways, made a deeper impact on the socio-cultural milieu by way of intellectual renaissance and political awareness. Besides other agents of change, diffusion of Western education and English language cultivated a liberal mindset that imbibed the spirit of occidental learning. The new cultural context, defined by English language and literature, strongly influenced Punjabi poetry and virtually transformed its medieval make-up and expanded its scope.

This study attempts to investigate this influence on Punjabi poetry (1849-1949), particularly in the works of those poets who had been exposed to Western education and literature, to determine the nature and range of its impact with a view to identifying the new trends and directions in form, content and style.

It analyses the gradual changes from words and images inspired by British presence to the new forms, themes and symbols introduced under the influence of English literature. It also explores the influence on Punjabi language and the manner in which new words, compounds and structures have been formed and integrated. The cultural imperialism, spread and strengthened through diffusion of Western knowledge, affected all intellectual activities including poetry. Punjabi poetry thus absorbed modernity in all its manifestations. This study attempts to determine whether the Western influences affected the traditional character, charm and appeal of this popular expression or changed it for the better?