CHAPTER 1

The M.A. course in English

Vis-a-vis

the Universities in Andhra Pradesh
Overview:

The present chapter is divided into three sections. Section 1.1 outlines the history of English studies at the postgraduate level in India while 1.2 presents the status quo of English Studies. The course of English studies at the postgraduate level has been uniform since the time it was first introduced in India during the British rule. Hence the history is uneventful and brief. 1.2 also deals with some of the major problems of the higher education today while commenting on the status quo of English studies at the postgraduate level in India. This section serves as a backdrop to the ensuing section 1.3.

Section 1.3 attempts a description of the M.A. courses in English vis-a-vis the universities in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In the absence of any explicitly stated objectives for the M.A. courses, syllabus which is an inseparable part of the course becomes doubly important as it becomes a source from which the implicit objectives of the course could be elicited. This section, therefore, presents an outline of the syllabi of the M.A. courses used by the different universities as on 31st December 2000.

The syllabi in all the universities of the state have been restructured to fit into a semester pattern as opposed to the annual pattern which has been in operation for the last many decades. Following the guidelines set by the UGC Model Curriculum (2001), all the universities have adopted semester system. Osmania university was the first to adopt semester system from the academic year 2000-01 and Andhra university was the second to follow suit from 2001-02. All the other five universities adopted semester pattern from the academic year 2002 onwards.
The changes made in the syllabi of the different universities with the introduction of semester system are not considered here as the period of the present study confines to six years from 1996 to 2002. Besides, the effect of the changes just made in the curriculum can be assessed only in due course of time. However, a mention of these changes has been made in the concluding chapter of the present thesis.

1.1: A Brief History of English Studies at the Postgraduate level in India

The Postgraduate courses in different disciplines did not exist in a form akin to their present form until about 1904, as Tickoo Champa points out in her Indian Universities:

Modelled as they were on the British pattern, our universities of the nineteenth century, did not engage in any research whatsoever. Nor did they provide regular courses for postgraduate teaching. The M.A. examination was open to any graduate of the university on payment of the prescribed fee and within one month (later extended to one year) of the passing of the B.A. examination.

The first step towards postgraduate teaching followed the new regulations that were necessitated by the Indian Universities Act, 1904. The regulations introduced three important changes at the university... they made it essential for the candidate for an M.A. degree to pursue a regular course of studies and ... they widened the scope and character of the M.A. courses, bringing them in line with those of some British universities. The result was the introduction of M.A. and M.Sc. courses in a number of universities. (Tickoo: 1980, p.105).
M.A in English is one of the first courses to be offered in the Indian universities. If we take a look at the history of teaching English at the postgraduate and honours levels in India we notice, that it has been very uneventful and unvarying. In a large number of universities English at the post graduate level is being taught today in almost in the same manner as it was taught when it was first introduced in the Indian universities. There have been a few changes with respect to the course content but the methodology of executing the course has remained

The Lie of the Land substantiates this.

In view of the long history, and of the number and size of English departments in India’s universities, it is not surprising that English literature should continue to be part of the academic establishment. Traditional pedagogic methods and assumptions about its study are still maintained largely intact.

(Sunder Rajan : 1992, p.1)

From the time English studies was first introduced in India till about nineteen sixties the standard canon of English literature from Chaucer and Shakespeare, through Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, Browning and Tennyson constituted the sole content of the M.A. course. Changes with respect to the course content came about since the nineteen sixties first with the introduction of American literature and then Indian writing in English and Commonwealth literature. As Meenakshi Mukherjee in her "Certain Long - Simmering Questions" observes:

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The course of English studies in India remained fairly static from mid-nineteenth century, when it was first institutionalised, to mid-twentieth century...

(Mukherjee: 1993, p. 30)

She also adds,

After a century of stasis, in the sixties of our century, some marginal changes began to take place in the curriculum of English studies in India. The first fissures in the monolith came with the introduction of American literature in certain Universities, to be followed some years later by the grudging academic acceptance of Indian writing in English and then Commonwealth literature. But these changes, though welcome, do not amount to a shift in the basic concept of English studies in India.

(Mukherjee: 1993, p. 32)

In the eighties a language component comprising General Linguistics and Phonetics also came to be introduced in most universities.

Barring a few English departments like those of the Central University of Hyderabad and Jawaharlal Nehru University which enjoy a lot of autonomy in framing and reframing the syllabus frequently (as frequently as every semester), most departments of English in India follow more or less a uniform pattern of syllabus.

The course generally comprises eight to ten papers out of which at least half of them pertain to British literature. A glance at the syllabi followed in different departments of the universities in Andhra Pradesh – which is given in 1.3.2 – will
prove this. American literature, Commonwealth literature, Indian writing in English and a language related paper constitute the other half of the course content. While some universities offer only all compulsory papers, some offer a few optionals. Those departments which offer optionals have a range of specializations like Australian literature, Canadian literature, Translation studies, English Language Teaching etc.

That the syllabus pattern and its teaching have not changed significantly over the last many years despite the radical changes in the social demands and needs of the students is a major problem to be reckoned with in the pedagogy of English at the postgraduate level in India. The courses have survived too long in their obsolete moulds and cannot continue if they do not change to meet the contemporary demands of the society. That the programmes of study offered at the universities in India do not reflect the fast-changing needs and demands was expressed in The Programme of Action (1986) published by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India:

The courses offered by the universities have not been reorganized to meet the demands of the times. Their relevance and utility are constantly questioned.


Thus the need for improving and restructuring the curricula at the postgraduate level has long been recognized; yet very little has been done in this direction.

Changes have to be made not just in the syllabi but also in all the corresponding components of the course like teaching and learning methods and evaluation practices.
1.2: The status quo

In India, higher education in general at the post graduate level seems to be suffering from innumerable problems both at the fundamental and systemic levels. Lack of sufficient funds, running of programmes which are far remote from the realistic needs of the society, deterioration in standards, absence of an effective planning agency etc. are some of the reasons for the ineffective functioning of the higher education system in India.

Of the many factors responsible for the deterioration of educational standards at the post graduate level, the most important one seems to be the proliferation of universities and colleges in the post independent period. The nineteen universities of 1947 grew into more than two hundred universities in about fifty years. When we compare these figures with those of the pre-independent period, the three universities of 1857 grew into only nineteen by 1947. This proliferation has not been accompanied by proportionate spending of money on higher education. As a result, the limited financial resources have come to be shared by the rapidly increasing number of universities. The rapid increase in the number of institutions of higher education has so affected the quality of education that N.A. Karim in his article "In the throes of a financial crisis" goes to the extent of calling some of the state universities "academic slums". He says...

Indian higher education system was congenitally infirm and the proliferation of universities and colleges, particularly after Independence, some of which can rightly be called "academic slums" have contributed to further deterioration of standards. This
is particularly true of the mainstream state universities.

(The Hindu, Tuesday, February 13, 2001).

Yet another aspect of the higher education in India is that the inability of the courses to meet the needs of the students results in wastage of public money. Arguing that public money invested on higher education should be properly utilized taking into account the actual needs of the society, Tickoo in her Indian Universities observes:

The multiplication and strengthening of traditional specialisms often in disregard to demand (there is today a surfeit of English M.A.s seeking jobs) or with insufficient understanding of what exists, suggests the lack of a body to plan the future of our university education. The investment of public money (mainly through the UGC) on such departments which appear to be growing suggests further an absence of clear plans about how best to use the scarce resources that are available.

(Tickoo : 1980, p. 172)

At a time when higher education in India is in a financial crisis, it becomes all the more necessary for universities to spend the scant resources purposefully and meaningfully. In its introduction to Higher Education in India, the Commonwealth Universities Year Book gives a succinct picture of the status quo of Higher Education in India:

The number of universities shot up from 28 in 1950 to 228 in 1996, ... the number of colleges increased from 695 to 8613 during the same period ....
This uneven, unbalanced and not-so-well planned expansion has resulted in certain obvious infirmities in the system, eg, the growing mismatch between the world of knowledge and the world of work shown by the widening gap between the output of universities and the inputs required by the labour market; emphasis on quantity rather than quality; declining standards of teaching, examination and research; induction of substantial number of unmotivated students and teachers in the system; complete non-implementation of stated goals and continuance of situations and processes which were identified as major blocks in the path of implementation of strategic reforms.


If higher education in India today is in a state of crisis (financial and otherwise), so is English studies. Curiously, most teachers in the university departments of English considered in the present study do not seem to be alive to the so called "crisis ridden" status of English studies in India. As Satish Poduval in his "To Be in English Literature, now that ... : The Voyage Out" remarks:

The crisis has not been a ubiquitous phenomenon. Leave alone the non-metropolitan universities, where the debate has not yet reached, there are a great number of teachers even in the metropolitan "elite" universities who reject the crisis as a non-issue imported by the young brood of teachers who peddle "Western theories". My own assessment of the situation is that the so-called crisis marks a moment
of self-reflexive awareness about the profession in India, an awareness which radically seeks to make literary studies more relevant and significant in Indian social and cultural life.

(Poduval: 1997, p.146)

It should be noted that Satish Poduval here refers not so much to the financial aspects of the crisis but rather to the intellectual and academic aspects. For him, the crisis is a positive phenomenon as it marks a "moment of self-reflexive awareness" which seeks to make literary studies culturally and socially more relevant to Indian life.

If the higher education system in general requires remedial measures, so do the courses in English studies. That the field of English studies today is faced with new challenges and responsibilities has already been widely acknowledged by many scholars and educationists.

The series of seminars and symposia held in the last decade in several parts of the country on the past, present and future of English studies in India, {The seminars jointly organized in collaboration with the British council at Jawaharlal Nehru university (1990), at the University of Hyderabad (1991) and at Pune (1992)} and the publication of books like The Masks of Conquest (1989), Rethinking English (1991), The Lie of the Land (1992), Provocations (1993) and Subject to Change (1998) reflect the growing Indian concern with the status of English studies in the country. The extensive debate on the subject questions the very raison d'être of English studies in India. The need for effecting radical changes in the status quo of English studies in India has been emphasized time and again. Multiple possibilities of remodelling/recasting the courses have been suggested.
Even at the latest symposium held on the subject at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) in February 2001 (National Symposium on New Directions in English Studies in India) Prof Meenakshi Mukherjee’s plenary on "Porous Boundaries: Reconstituting English studies" and Prof Sukantha Chowdhary’s key note address on "Planting New flags: Defining the territories of English" and many other papers at the symposium pointed to the need for extending the scope of English studies in India by making them more interdisciplinary, intercultural and even interlingual.

The challenges and responsibilities are not uniform all through the nation and could vary from university to university depending on the local requirements. For instance, the requirements and needs of the students that join Delhi university or Madras university which are located in metropolitan cities, would be certainly different from those who join Sri Krishnadeva Raya university or Utkal university which are located in two remote places of the country. Therefore, it becomes important for every department to identify the challenges and tasks that lie before it in the immediate context.

Given the status quo of English studies in India, the present thesis examines the pedagogical scenario of English at the postgraduate level in Andhra Pradesh with specific reference to the objectives of teaching / learning. As has already been pointed out, the focus of the present thesis is not so much on the ideology of teaching English as on the practice of teaching it. This is not to suggest that there can be practice without ideology.
Before we move on to a detailed examination of the objectives in the second chapter, the next part of the present chapter gives a brief outline of the universities in the state of Andhra Pradesh and the M.A. course in English as it is offered in different universities of the state.

1.3: The Universities in Andhra Pradesh vis-a-vis the M.A. course in English

The state of Andhra Pradesh has eight universities (including the deemed university Sri Satya Sai Institute of Higher Learning) which offer a regular Masters degree in English. These universities along with some of their constituent and affiliated postgraduate centres located in different parts of the state offer Master of Arts degree in English to over seven hundred and fifty regular students. In addition to offering a regular M.A. in English, all the universities offer M.A. through distance or private mode as well. However, the present project concerns itself with the pedagogical scenario of regular M.A. courses in English offered by the different universities of the state. Incidentally, in each of the seven universities that offer the M.A. course through distance/private mode, the course content and the examination pattern are one and the same for both regular and correspondence/external courses.

Besides the seven universities and the one deemed university, the university of Hyderabad and the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) located at the state capital Hyderabad, also offer postgraduate courses in English. (CIEFL started offering various Masters degrees in English and its related subjects since the academic year (2000-2001)) But these two institutions and Sri Satya Sai
Institute of Higher Learning have not been taken into consideration for the purpose of the present study as they are central institutions where the admissions are open to students from all over India and as they function on a different footing altogether. The following are the seven universities in the state of Andhra Pradesh that offer regular postgraduate courses in English:

1. Andhra University
2. Kakatiya University
3. Nagarjuna University
4. Osmania University
5. Sri Krishnadeva Raya University
6. Sri Padmavati Mahila University
7. Sri Venkateswara University

The state of Andhra Pradesh is divided into three geographical regions namely Andhra, Rayalseema and Telangana. Two universities come under the jurisdiction of each region. Andhra university and Nagarjuna university are located in Andhra region. Similarly, Kakatiya and Osmania universities are located in Telangana region; Sri Krishnadeva Raya and Sri Venkateswara universities are located in the Rayalseema region. Thus Andhra university, Nagarjuna university, Kakatiya university, Osmania university, Sri Krishnadeva Raya and Sri Venkateswara universities are regional universities in that they have been established with the main objective of catering to the educational needs of the respective areas. 85% of seats are reserved for local students of that region and 15% are reserved for non-local students i.e. the students of the other regions.
Sri Padmavati Mahila University, though located in the Rayalseema region, is different from the other universities in the state at least in three respects:

- It is the only women’s university in the state.
- It is the only unitary university
- It is the only state university which offers proportionately equal number of seats to the women students of all the three regions of the state.

The university was established with the sole objective of catering to the educational needs of the women students of the state.

Six of the seven universities excepting Sri Padmavati Mahila University are co-educational and are affiliating universities. An affiliating university is one which has a number of colleges affiliated to it. A unitary university, on the contrary, is one which does not have any colleges affiliated to it.

1.3.1: The M.A course in English:

In the Indian system, higher education includes the education imparted after the 10+2 stage—ten years of primary and secondary education followed by two years of higher secondary education. In the case of Humanities, the Bachelor’s degree is awarded after three years of study following the +2 stage. The Master’s programme is usually of two-year duration.

The M.A course in English is offered by all the universities of the state over a period of two academic years. All the universities which offered their M.A. courses in English on an annual system for many decades have just adopted
the semester pattern following the recommendations of the UGC Model Curriculum (2001).

The intake of students to the M.A. course varies from university to university. While it is 30 at Osmania, it is 40 at Sri Venkateswara, Sri Krishnadeva Raya and Sri Padmavathi Mahila universities. It is 35 at Kakatiya and Nagarjuna universities. In an attempt to reach financial self-sufficiency, most universities have, of late, begun to offer a few payment/sponsored seats over and above the sanctioned regular intake. Candidates opting for payment seats are also expected to satisfy the eligibility criteria.

Eligibility to join the course:

But for a few minor variations, the eligibility criteria for admission to the M.A. course in English are by and large the same in all the universities of the state. Except Sri Padmavathi Mahila university, all the universities conduct an entrance examination to select students for the course.

Mode of Selection

Any student who has passed B.A./B.Sc./B.Com. or its equivalent examination with General English as one of the subjects of study with a minimum of a stipulated percentage of marks is eligible to seek admission. The minimum percentage of marks required varies from university to university. For instance, Nagarjuna university insists on a minimum of 50% marks in General English while Sri Venkateswara and Mahila universities have stipulated 40% and 45% respectively. In some universities, preference is given to students who have done B.A.Special English.
In Andhra Pradesh, at the graduate level "General English" is offered in the first two years of the three year programme as a compulsory paper to all students of science, commerce and arts. All the students in the state are required to study the same syllabus for General English under what is referred to as the "common core syllabus."

Syllabus and the Course content:

The basis for the division of the course content into papers in the seven universities of the state is of three types:

(i) Genre (e.g., Nagarjuna, Sri Krishnadeva Raya)

(ii) Periodwise/chronological (e.g., Osmania, Andhra, Sri Padmavathi & Kakatiya)

(iii) A mixed one (both genre & chronological) (e.g., Sri Venkateswara)

The total number of papers varies from eight to ten. (Osmania: eight, Sri Krishnadeva Raya, Kakatiya: nine, Andhra, Nagarjuna, Sri Padmavathi and Sri Venkateswara: ten)

British literature forms the major core of the course in all the universities. Non-British literature papers like American literature, Indian writing in English, Commonwealth literature etc. are offered mostly as optionals.

All the seven universities offer a language paper as a compulsory one. But the nature of the paper varies in two significant ways. Universities like Andhra have a 'History of the English Language' while Osmania, Kakatiya and Sri
Padmavathi have "the Structure of Modern English". Universities like Sri Krishnadeva Raya, Sri Venkateswara and Nagarjuna have papers which combine both the history and the structure of the English language.

Literary criticism is also a common compulsory part of the course content in all the seven universities. While universities like Krishnadeva Raya and Padmavathi have incorporated practical criticism too, the other universities have only theory.

An exclusive paper on Shakespeare is offered in three of the seven universities (Andhra, Nagarjuna and Venkateswara)

System of Teaching or Teaching methodology:

The most predominantly used method of teaching at the postgraduate level is lecture method in all the universities of the state. Making the students present seminars is also occasionally followed in all the universities. Discussions and making the students read out from the texts in class are two other ways of teaching mentioned by the teachers in the survey. No other teaching techniques or methods seem to be followed in the M.A. course in English.

Examination Pattern:

For the M.A. course, the examination pattern is more or less the same in all the universities. At the end of every academic year examinations are conducted and the answer scripts are evaluated by two examiners and the average of the two valuations is taken as the final score. In some universities both the valuations are done by external examiners, while in some, one valuation is done internally by
the teachers concerned and the other by the external members. If the difference of marks between the two valuations is more than fifteen percent then the papers are sent for a third valuation by some universities.

1.3.2: A Sketch of the Seven Universities in the State

Andhra University

This university was founded in the year 1926 and is located at Visakhapatnam. The Department of English in the university came into existence in 1945. It has one constituent college and four affiliated postgraduate centres under its jurisdiction which offer M.A. English. The constituent college called "Andhra university Postgraduate Extension Centre" is located at Kakinada and the four affiliated P.G. centres are located at Bhimavaram, Narasapuram, Eluru and Visakhapatnam. The student intake at each centre is thirty. The M.A course consists of ten papers and the syllabus outline is as follows:

M.A. Previous.

Paper I - The History of the English Language
Paper II - Shakespeare
Paper III - Modern Literature I (1550 - 1700)
Paper IV - Modern Literature II (1700 - 1850)
Paper V - Modern Literature III (1850 - 1980)

M.A. Final

Paper I - Literary Criticism
Paper II - American Literature
Paper III - Indian English Literature
Nagarjuna University

Started off as a postgraduate extension centre of Andhra university, Nagarjuna university acquired the status of a fullfledged university in the year 1976. The university is located at Nagarjuna Nagar which lies almost midway between the towns Guntur and Vijayawada. The M.A course in English was offered here even before the P.G. Extension Centre became an independent university. This university has no constituent colleges but has five affiliated postgraduate centres. Two of these five postgraduate centres are located at Vijayawada, two at Guntur and one at Peda Nandipadu. Till the academic year 1999-2000 the student intake to the M.A course in the University was forty. But the number of seats has been reduced to thirty five from the academic year 2000 - 2001. The course comprises ten papers:

Optionals
1. New Literatures
2. Romantics
3. Twentieth century Literature
4. Novel
5. Commonwealth Literature - Special Studies
6. Age of Shakespeare
7. Age of Tennyson
8. American Literature - Special Studies.
M.A. Previous
1. The English Language.
2. Poetry
3. Drama
4. Prose and Fiction
5. Optionals
   (a) Elizabethan Age
   (b) Romantic Age
   (c) Victorian Age

M.A. Final
1. Literary Criticism
2. Shakespeare
3. Indian Writing in English
4. American Literature
5. Optionals.
   (a) European Classics
   (b) Commonwealth Literature
   (c) A Major Form – Drama
   (d) A Major Form – Fiction

Kukatiya University

This university, set up as a postgraduate extension centre of Osmania University at Warangal acquired the status of a fullfledged university in the year 1976. M.A in English has been offered here since 1968. It has two constituent colleges and has no affiliated colleges. One of the constituent colleges is situated at Warangal itself and the other is at Nirmal in Adilabad district. The student intake is thirty five for the main campus and twenty each for the constituent colleges. The M.A. course comprises the following nine papers all of which are compulsory.
M.A. Previous

Paper I – English Literature (1550 - 1660)
Paper II – Restoration and 18th Century Literature
Paper III – 19th Century Literature
Paper IV – The Structure of Modern English

M.A. Final

Paper I – 20th Century English Literature
Paper II – Literary Criticism
Paper III – English Language Teaching
Paper IV – American Literature
Paper V – Commonwealth Literature

Osmania University

Established in 1918, Osmania University is the oldest university in the state. The Department of English at this university is as old as the university itself. The department started offering its postgraduate programme in English in 1937. Located at Hyderabad, the state capital, the university has four constituent colleges including the University college of Arts. All the four colleges are located within the Hyderabad city. Besides these four constituent colleges, the university has two affiliated postgraduate centres offering M.A. English. One of these is located at Hyderabad while the other is located at Nizamabad. The student intake is thirty per campus and the course comprises eight papers (As per the syllabus followed upto 2000 - 01).
M.A. Previous

1. The Structure of Modern English.
2. 16th and 17th Century British Literature
3. 18th Century British Literature
4. 19th Century British Literature

M.A. Final

5. Modern British Literature
6. American Literature
7. Indian writing in English

Optionals

8. (a) English Language Teaching
    (b) Post Colonial Literature
    (c) Women’s Writing.
    (d) European Classics in Translation

Sri Krishnadeva Raya University

The Present Sri Krishnadeva Raya university which began as a Postgraduate Extension Centre of Sri Venkateswara university became a fullfledged autonomous university in the year 1981. M.A. in English was offered even before the university acquired its present status in 1981. Situated at Ananthapur, the university has no affiliated or constituent colleges that offer M.A. English. The student intake is forty and the course comprises the following nine papers.

M.A. Previous

Paper I – English Poetry
Paper II – English Drama
Paper III – English Fiction
Paper IV – The English language
M.A. Final

Paper V – Comparative Literature
Paper VI – Indian English Literature
Paper VII – Common wealth Literature
Paper VIII – Literary Criticism : Theory and Practice
Paper IX – Optionals
   ( A ) American Literature
   ( B ) Indian Literature
   ( C ) Translation : Theory and Practice

Sri Padmavati Mahila University

Founded in 1983, this university is located at Tirupati. It enjoys the unique distinction of being the only women's university in the state. The department of English came into existence the same year and it started offering the M.A. course in 1984. It has no constituent or affiliated colleges under its jurisdiction. The student intake is forty and the course comprises ten papers, all of which are compulsory.

M.A Previous

Paper I – The Structure of Modern English
Paper II – 16th Century British Literature
Paper III – 17th and 18th Century British Literature
Paper V - Modern Literature – 20th Century
Sri Venkateswara University

Located in Tirupati, Sri Venkateswara University is the third university to be established in the state. It was founded in 1954. The university has been offering the M.A course in English since 1959. It has no constituent colleges which offer M.A. English. The university has two affiliated postgraduate centres offering M.A English. These P.G.Centres are located at Nellore. The student intake is forty on the university campus and thirty each for the P.G. centres. The course comprises the following ten papers:

M.A. Previous

Paper I – Shakespeare
Paper II – Poetry from the Renaissance to the Romantic Revival
Paper III – Novel
Paper IV – Prose and Literary Criticism
Paper V – History of the English Language

M.A. Final

Paper I – Drama from 16th Century to 20th Century
Paper II – Poetry from 1830 to the present
Paper III -- (a) An intensive study of a Poet: Milton and his works or (b) Commonwealth Literature

Paper IV – Indian English Literature

Paper V – American Literature

This chapter has attempted an outline of the history of the English studies in India, and the status quo of Higher Education in India with specific reference to the English studies. In 1.3, it has given a description of the seven universities in Andhra Pradesh in relation to the M.A. courses they offer in English. It has also provided an outline of the syllabi followed in the seven universities of the state as on 30th December 2000.