

Chapter III

A Brief Cultural History of Indian Poetry in English (Till 1990)

No semiotic system exists in isolation, thus every culture in being a system has to be studied both as an immanent culture and in its relation with the extra-culture and the dynamics of its internal and external structures. Indian poetry in English as a cultural text is a hierarchy of texts evolved through the interaction of the internal sphere with the external sphere and as a result of the amalgamation of both gradual (continuous) and explosive (unpredictable) processes. It has established itself as a culture by delimiting its boundaries, though fluid and permeable, through a process of self description. The first interactions between English and India were not between just two languages like English and Hindi or English or Sanskrit. They were happening in a polyglot environment consisting of languages like English, Sanskrit, Persian and Bengali. It would be best to see them as interactions of multiple heterogeneous semiotic systems within one semiosphere.

This chapter discusses the cultural-historical evolution of the Indian poetry in English, the over two century long journey from ‘Anglo-Indian’ to ‘Indo-Anglian’ to finally ‘Indian’ poetry in English. The nationalist concerns have led literary historians to consider only poets of Indian origin as part of the Indian English canon, beginning with Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831). Accordingly Indian poetry in English is supposed to have begun in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Though considering Derozio as an Indian poet defined by conventional parameters also has its complications owing to his mixed parentage. To take a more encompassing view we have to consider all English poetry written in India whether by Indians or otherwise. We could also define Indian poetry in English as English language poetry which draws its metaphors from and is culturally located in the polyglottism and dynamism of the Indian “semiosphere”.

This view extends the scope to as far back as the arrival of the English in India. Native British writing in English shared literary cultures with these poets. Most of these early British poets were born in Britain and had come to India as civil servants

or missionaries but they had imbibed Indian culture and shared the same polyglossia. Most of them like their Indian counterparts were multilinguals and had exposure to multiple cultures, two of the most common characteristics of Indian English poets till date. Some of these British writers were even born and educated in India. These poets shared or at least were witness to the same socio-cultural and historical space as the Indians and which is well evident in their verse. They were in dialogue with the contemporary Indians writing in English. They used Indian metaphors as much as they owed their allegiance to the British poetry in England.

The introduction of the English language into the literary scene in India was an invasion of foreign elements or semiotic structures from extra cultural sphere into the internal sphere of the culture in India. These intrusions according to Lotman act in three ways: Firstly they (“alien” or “*chuzoi*”) may be translated into the internal language of the culture and accepted as own (“*svoi*”). Secondly when the energy of the intrusion is immense it completely replaces the internal language and thirdly it may act as a catalyst without being a participant and accelerate the dynamic processes.

The earliest notable writings in English by Indians began as a reaction to the misinterpretations of India in the prevalent writings in the language thus they chose prose to serve their political intentions deliberately choosing not to use the language for creative expression. The first such instances of indigenous writing in English were Dean Mahomet’s *Travel’s*(1794), an epistolary travel narrative, C V Boriah’s ‘Account of the Jains’(1809), a report on oral history, and Rammohun Roy’s writings (1820-1830), comprising journalism, translations of scriptures and social debates. The first indigenous poets in English began writing around the first quarter of the nineteenth century in this same textual-political environment and, as Dharwadker notes, developed two distinct orientations towards it. In one direction, the poetry remained embedded within the larger sub-continental literature in English, and hence produced within its own textual formation the dynamic of critique, counter- critique and self –reflexive critique that had preceded it. In other direction, however, it reacted to its antecedents by devaluing prose and elevating

verse as the vehicle of indigenous expression, and launching an ambitious aestheticization of subcontinental discourse and experience, which transposed the conflicts between India and Britain(or East and West) from the social , economic and political planes onto the poetic plane. These two orientations proved to be seminal, because they shaped much of the development of poetry in the high colonial and postcolonial periods. But the objects of criticism and aestheticization turned out to be variable over time, changing with successive generations of poets, entering into new combinations, and even cancelling each other. The history of the poetry therefore became inseparable from the story of a series of aesthetic and critical positions that individual poets and groups of poets invented in order to deal with their particular circumstances and with the material and cultural conditions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These positions opened up the poetry to a range of historical ironies and cultural ambiguities, as also to a variety of conflicts over language, literariness, identity, representation and originality (265-266).

Nomads(anglo-indian and indo-anglian): The beginning of English language poetry in India happened in a special polyglot, multicultural, multinational space. The first poets were like nomads working across cultural and geographic borders acting as catalytic agents changing the structure of poetic culture on both sides. These poets were culturally dislocated. Lotman defines ‘nomads’ as settlers who form a zone of cultural bilingualism, ensuring semiotic contacts between two worlds (7). There were poets of British origin who served in India or were born and had lived in India and then there were poets of Indian or mixed origin most of whom studied or lived in England, having first language proficiency in English. There were Eurasians like Derozio who considered themselves Indian and there were Indians like Michael Madhusudan Dutt who aspired to become European.

During colonial times Jones’s translations of Sanskrit and Persian verse had lent oriental tropes and themes to British poetry which in turn influenced English poetry being written in India. Gibson notes that ‘poets born in India, in turn, made poems shaped by Persian, Sanskrit, and vernacular poetry as well as by the poetic practices

of British romanticism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the range of English language poetic production in India widened, drawing poets from varied backgrounds and moving into realms domestic, religious, and political.’

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, born in 1809 in Calcutta of an Indo-Portuguese father and an English mother, is considered the first Indian poet writing in English. Though of mixed descent he was born and brought up in India and worked as a teacher at Hindu college where he ran a discussion group called the Academic Association. Through this group he could charge the Calcutta youths with patriotism, free will and question idolatry. He was the first to sing of India’s freedom. In *To India – My Native Land* he eulogizes the past glory of India:

My country! In thy days of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow
and worshipped as a deity thou wast—

and in *Harp of India* he refers to the poets who have lost their glory under British rule.

Thy music once was sweet — who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
Like ruined monument on desert plain:

Derozio’s notion of freedom was derived from the ideals of the French revolution. He believed in freedom as the natural state of human beings. In *Freedom to the Slave* he writes that a slave when freed looks at birds, rivers and wind and finds himself as free as they.

Then thought on winds and birds, and floods,
And cried, I’m free as they!

Derozio's was writing in the intellectual and cultural efflorescence of the modern Indian renaissance. In *Fakeer of Jungheera* he writes against the inhuman ritual of *Sati*. It tells the story of Nuleeni, a widow who is about to ascend the funeral pyre following the ritual of *Sati*. She is saved by Jungheera, the bandit and her past lover.

Poets of John Company (1921) by Theodore Douglas Dunn was the first comprehensive anthology of poetry written by Englishmen in India. This anthology specifically compiled poetry by Englishmen as poetry by Indians was already published by him in *The Bengali Book of English Verse*(1918). The collection has poems by twenty six English poets besides many anonymous poems. Dunn himself makes it clear in the introduction that the poems in the collection except for a few established poets may not have much literary value but are important because of the special historical context in which they were produced.

“Whatever may be said finally upon the value of the work produced by our exiled poets, their range and enterprise have been considerable. The best of them sought to interpret Eastern life and thought through the medium of English poetry, and so to assimilate their knowledge and experience of India as to enrich the literary inheritance of their countrymen.” (xiii)

The collection includes poets like Sir William Jones(1746-1794), Warren Hastings (1732-1818), Reginald Heber(1783-1826), John Leyden(1775-1911), Henry Meredith Parker(1796-1868), and Sir Alfred Lyall(1835-1911). Dunn could not include poems by Sir Edwin Arnold(1832-1904) due to copyright forbidding reproduction of any of his works but he attempts to give him due credit by mentioning him in the introduction. The collection also includes poems by Derozio.

Sir William Jones (1746-1794), the founder of the Asiatic Society, arrived in Bengal in 1783 appointed as a puisne judge to the Supreme Court of Judicature at

Fort William, Calcutta. The Europeans and the North Americans got access to Persian and Sanskrit verses through his translations. In his “Essay on the Poetry of Eastern Nations” he laments the literary sterility of contemporary European poetry which had “subsisted too long on the perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions to the same fables” and he believes that oriental translations could offer “a new set of images and similitudes; and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate”(qtd. in Cannon and Brine 106) His translations influenced British romantic poets and on the other hand most of the first generation of poets in India were influenced by British romanticism.

Cannon considers him the first Anglo-Indian Poet and says that the Hymns are “his most original and creative poems, with attractive even resplendent imagery. They are true odes, each with an intricate structure and a majestic evolution of thought” (237). He wrote in Miltonic stanza “A Hymn to Camdeo” bringing the sensuous Kama to life :

“He bends the luscious cane, and twists the string
With bees, how sweet! but ah, how keen their sting!
He with five flowerets tip thy ruthless darts,
Which through five senses pierce enraptur'd hearts.”

This hymn was followed by “A Hymn to Narayena” in 1785.

“A form cerulean flutter'd o'er the deep,
Brightest of beings, greatest of the great:
Who, not as mortals steep,
Their eyes in dewy sleep,
But heav'nly-pensive on the Lotus lay,
That blossom'd at his touch and shed a golden ray.”

Jones’ Hymns were widely reprinted in British periodicals after being first published in *The Asiatick Miscellany*(1785). Jones also wrote “The Hindu Wife”

or “The Enchanted Fruit” (1784) a poem in 287 couplets based on Draupadi in the *Mahabharata*. Even though its literary merit remains doubtful, being heavily overburdened with footnotes and explanations of Indian geography and food names etc, it captures without judging a culture quite alien to the west in a mock heroic way :

“Preposterous! that one biped vain
Should drag ten housewives in his train,
And stuff them in a gaudy cage,
Slaves to weak lust, or potent rage!
Not such the Dwapar Yug!-oh then
ONE BUXOM DAME MIGHT WED FIVE MEN.”

Some other native English poets who wrote in and about India during colonial times not included in Dunn’s anthology are Sir John Horsford who was born in England, Mary Carshore and Mary Leslie who were born and died in India, Henry Page though of obscure origin who considered himself a friend of Derozio and an Indian Patriot.

The Bengali Book of English Verse(1918) compiled by Dunn included seventeen poets namely Kasi Prasad Ghose, Rajnarain Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Hur Chunder Dutt, Govin Chunder Dutt, Omesh Chunder Dutt, Nobo Kissen Ghose (Ram Sharma), Maharajah Sir Jotindra Mohun Tagore, Greece Chunder Dutt, Shoshee Chunder Dutt, Toru Dutt, Romesh Chunder Dutt, Narendra Nath Dutta(Swami Vivekananda), Roby Dutt, Profulla Ranjan Das, Sarojini Naidu and Manmohan Ghose. Interestingly the dedication page of the book itself declares that it is a “memorial of Bengali Achievement in the Language of the British Empire(iv)”.

While Derozio was racially hybrid, there was another group of Indian poets who were culturally hybrid due to religious conversion. Michael Madhusudan Dutt(1824-1873) who converted to Christianity at a young age of 19, married an

English girl then a French girl, is a fine example of cultural hybridization involved in religious conversion. He longed to go to England and greatly admired Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley. He was divided between India and England. He refused to marry an eight year old girl as per his parents' wish and ran away from home to adopt Christianity. He moved to Madras where most of his English works were written. His best known work in English *The Captive Ladie* (1849) is a long metrical romance in two cantos which narrated the story of the Prithvi Raj, the Rajput king of Delhi and the Princess of Kannauj. Other major works in English are *Visions of the Past*, *King Porus* etc. Madhusudan did not merely fuse English prosody and Indian content but "bent the language itself so that it could convey the verbal and syntactic 'flavour' of Sanskrit, Persian and Bengali poetic sensibilities as precisely as possible" (Dharwadker 268). He came back to Calcutta in 1856 where at the age of 34 he started writing exclusively in Bengali. Though his writings in English could not bring him the much aspired recognition, his Bengali works established him as a literary genius. He is regarded as the father of modern Bengali poetry and also pioneer of Bengali drama. He introduced blank verse poetry in Bengali poetry.

Even after being so successful as a literary figure in Bengal, his longing to go to England was not pacified. He ultimately moved to England in 1862 to become a Barrister-at-Law. Due to financial troubles he moved to Versailles and then later in 1865 came back to England supported by Vidyasagar. In 1867 he returned to Calcutta. Disillusioned with European culture during his stay in England he wrote to his friend Gour Das Basak in 1865:

If there be anyone among us anxious to leave a name behind him, and not pass away into oblivion like a brute, let him devote himself to his mother-tongue. That is his legitimate sphere—his proper element. European scholarship is good in as much as it renders us masters of the intellectual resources of the most civilized quarters of the globe; but when we speak to the world, let us speak in our own language. (599)

He Indianised English which set an example for later writers especially novelists like Rushdie, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. His behaviour may have been irrational for his family when he converted to Christianity but for his unpredictable Indianisation of English he is more of a Lotmanian ‘Madman’.

Toru Dutt(1856-1877) was born in a well known Hindu Dutt family of Rambagan in Calcutta but soon her father Govin Chandra Dutt and later the whole family converted to Christianity. In 1869 Toru and her elder sister Aru along with their mother were taken to Europe by their father. They first lived in Nice, France where they learnt French and then moved to England. Both sisters continued their French studies and attended Higher Lectures for Women at the University of Cambridge between 1871-73. Being a natural polyglot Toru had mastered Bengali, French, English and later Sanskrit at a young age. Her translation of French poetry into English *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* was published in 1876 by the Saptahik Sambad Press, Bhowanipore without any preface or introduction. Though initially unappreciated, it was Edmund Gosse’s review of the same in *The Examiner* which brought her fame. At the age of nineteen she started learning Sanskrit and wrote *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, published posthumously in 1882, which compiles her translations and adaptations from Sanskrit literature.

Sarojini Naidu(1879-1949): Called the Nightingale of India, Sarojini Naidu was born to a Bengali Hindu family in the erstwhile state of Hyderabad. Her father Aghorenath Chattopadhyay was the principal of the Nizam’s college. She got educated at the Kings College London and Girton College, Cambridge. In the introduction of *The Bird of Time* (1912) Edmund Gosse reveals how he expected from her “not a réchauffé of Anglo-Saxon sentiment in an Anglo-Saxon setting, but some revelation of the heart of India” and advised her not to write about robins and skylarks in the landscape of the Midland counties but “to describe the flowers, the fruits, the trees, to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid population of her own voluptuous and

unfamiliar province; in other words to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever, machine-made imitator of the English classics.(5)” Her poetry collections include *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time*(1912), *The Broken Wing* (1917), *The Sceptred Flute* (1943) and *Feather of the Dawn*(1961) published posthumously. Her poetry, though influenced deeply by the British Romantics, celebrated traditional Indian life.

While British, by over glorifying Sanskrit literature, propagated the notion which the Indian (Hindu) nationalists believed that of Moghul Era being the ‘dark age’ for India, there were Muslim poets who overlooked the Muslim invaders and focussed on the invasion by other European powers and how Britain had brought ‘peace’ to the nation. An example of the same is *The Voice of Islam and other poems* (1914) by A.S.H. Hussain:

Proud Portugal to snatch the gems
From brows of orient princes came;
Fair France foresaw in flowery Ind
A fitting field for warlike fame.

Then triumph of the British arms
Bid rivalry and discord cease,
To our war-wearied country grave
The priceless heritage of peace.

(Part I.)

The Spiritual Poets (Seers): At the turn of the century poets like Tagore, Aurobindo and Vivekananda wrote poetry of devotion and spiritual enlightenment which is considered the defining characteristic of Indian culture. These poets were in the true sense ‘kawi’. This Sanskrit word for ‘poet’ means a ‘seer’ or the ‘enlightened one’. Aurobindo himself believed that an epic poetry comes when a seer appears.

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was a philosopher, yogi, revolutionary and a poet. His father wanted a completely western upbringing for him and so he moved him to England at the tender age of seven along with his brothers. There he first studied privately with a clergyman and later got into St Paul' school, London. He studied for ICS at the King's College, Cambridge but didn't join ICS. He later came to Baroda joining the state services in 1893 and then in 1897 as a teacher at Baroda college (now known as the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda). While in Baroda he became involved in nationalist movements and in 1906 after the Bengal Partition formally moved to Calcutta where he became involved in active politics from 1906. He was arrested for his alleged involvement in the Alipore bomb case and imprisoned for a year. During his stay in the jail he had spiritual experiences and revelations. In 1907 he was introduced to a yogi Vishnu Bhasker Lele who initiated him into the life of a yogi. In 1910 he quit all political activities and moved to Pondicherry where eventually he founded the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926. It was here that he wrote *Savitri*, an epic poem in approximately 24000 lines. He kept revising the same all his life.

Savitri : A Legend and a Symbol, an epic poem in blank verse is the major poetic work of Aurobindo Ghose. The earliest manuscript of the same is dated 1916 though he kept revising it all his life. It presents Savitri a legend from the *Mahabharata* as a symbol of human soul's spiritual destiny. The epic describes Aurobindo's "vision of existence and explores the reason for ignorance, darkness, suffering and pain, the purpose of life on earth and the prospect of a glorious future for humanity."

Nature, shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.

(710)

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) wrote mostly in Bengali but also wrote in English besides translating his own works in Bengali to English. He got the Nobel

prize for literature in 1913 for *Gitanjali*. The west considered *Gitanjali* a sacred text and Tagore a guru. Tagore considered God as the poet of poets:

My poet's vanity dies in shame before the sight.
O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let
me make my life simple and straight, like a flute
of reed for thee to fill with music.

Swami Vivekananda(1863-1902) is most commonly known as a great spiritual leader and India's spiritual ambassador to the West. But he himself claimed to be "first and foremost a poet" (Narasimhaiah, 42). Like Tagore he also wrote poems in English as well as in Bengali and even translated from Bengali and Sanskrit. His poems primarily deal with *Bhakti* and *Advaita* philosophy. Through his poems he urged people to feel the divinity within and without. In his poem "To the Fourth of July" written to commemorate American Independence Day he talks of liberty and universal freedom. But this freedom also has to be from the holds of *Maya*.

"All hail to thee, thou Lord of Light!
A welcome new to thee, today,
O Sun! today thou sheddest Liberty!" (24)

Many of his poems were written immediately after he had mystical experiences. "Kali The Mother" (1898) is one such poem written after he visited Kshir Bhavani temple in Kashmir. The poem begins with images of a tempest symbolizing the turmoils of the world.

The stars are blotted out,
Clouds are covering clouds,
It is darkness, vibrant, sonant.
In the roaring whirling wind
Are the souls of a million lunatics,—
But loosed from the prison house,—

But Kali who also represents death and destruction comes to those who hug death.

Who can misery love,
Dance in destruction's dance,
And hug the form of Death,—
To him the Mother comes

Goodwin referring to the Indian poets up to the first quarter of the twentieth century writes in the *Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1927):

“The Indian poet of to-day is torn, like the Indian painter, between admiration for Western models and a desire to mould himself thereon, and an inherent Indian tradition that runs in his veins and will not be denied... We of the West do not want from the East poetic edifices built upon a foundation of Yeats and Shelley and Walt Whitman.” (9-10)

Post independence poets: Pre-independence Gandhian period did not have many noteworthy poets and as Naik(1982) notes “these writers of verse may conveniently be considered in two groups- practitioners of religious, mystical, philosophical, reflective verse, including the disciples of Sri Aurobindo, and poets mainly in the Romantic-Victorian tradition, who have a wider range of themes and who occasionally also try, rather half-heartedly, to experiment with modernism(150).” The first group includes poets like K.D. Sethna(1904-2011), Nolini Kanta Gupta(1889-1983), J.Krishnamuti (1895-1986), Swami Paramananda(1884-1940), T. L.Vasvani(1879-1966), K.S. Venkatramani(1891-1952), Brajendra Nath Seal (1864-1938) etc. The second group includes poets like G. K. Chettur(1898-1936), S.K. Chettur(1905-1972), V.N. Bhusan(1909-1951), K. S. R. Sastry(1878-1970), Fredoon Kabraji(1897-1986) etc.

Declaration of India’s independence from British colonial rule on 15th Aug 1947 was an ‘explosive’ moment not just in the history of India but more so in the semiosphere of Indian poetry in English. An explosion disrupts any system, destroys the structural stability of the core spreading the matter at the core towards periphery and introduces unpredictability. The newly formed nation was busy

integrating hundreds of erstwhile states into the union of India. A very strong wave of nationalism was needed to keep the core together. The semiosphere needed a new self description which expelled any structures from extra culture. Thus Indian poets writing in English were despised. In the following decades the critics, anthologists almost excluded all 'Indian' poetry written by non-Indians including Anglo-Indians. Even earlier Indian poets were found alienated from their real environment and only submitting to a colonial modernity project. The use of Indian myths or themes was superficial as there was a discord between the language and the culture being portrayed. King considers their language, attitude and perception distant, vague and unfocussed. They were after all doing what they were expected to. These "colonial poets had the job of trying to introduce Indian themes, subject matter and landscape into what was basically British poetry"(110-111). The new poets writing in the 1950's and 1960's wrote with more awareness of their environment, immediacy and directness. They were no longer trying to portray a generalized, stereotyped India. These poets are often termed as 'modern' poets, a term contested by critics like Paranjape and Dharwadker who see a continuity of tradition. Some of the major modern poets are Nissim Ezekiel, Keki N. Daruwalla, A.K. Ramanujan, Shiv K. Kumar, Pritish Nandy, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra and Arun Kolatkar.

Nissim Ezekiel's (1924-2004) first collection *A Time to Change*(1952) marks the beginning of modern Indian poetry in English. Ezekiel and other poets in the 1960s broke away from the nationalist poets of the colonial times writing to counter the colonial cultural onslaught. For the nationalists British were the 'other' whereas for the modernists "the Other was not the British, the West, Pakistan or feudal landlords oppressing peasants, the subject was the self, the world around the writer, and the Other was often the Indians who did not share the modern secular urban values of the writers. (King 8)"

Nissim Ezekiel's collections include *A Time to Change*(1952), *Sixty Poems*(1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man*(1960), *The Exact*

Name(1965) , *Hymns in Darkness*(1976) and *Latter Day Psalms*(1982). Coming from a Marathi speaking Jewish Bene Israel family and who struggled to come to terms with the new India, alienation is a major theme in his poems but at the same time he presents a life which is personal and that he witnessed everyday around him in often ironic diction. Ezekiel's influence can be easily witnessed in the later poets especially the Bombay poets.

Ezekiel probably had the most varied career from a deck scrubber on a ship, manager, copy writer to a professor of English. But since quite early in his career he was consistent in his writings beginning with literary articles and book reviews in English periodicals and newspapers and his first book of poems *A Time to Change* (1952). He also worked as an editor for many journals and periodicals like *Quest*, *Imprint* and *Poetry India*. He had an active association with P.E.N. and in 1972 he became the joint executive editor for *The Indian P.E.N.*

Ezekiel's poems present a close observation of the self in his local situations, in an ironic diction, often generalizing. There is critical self consciousness and artistic distancing of emotions. His poetry also comes from the conflict between tradition and modernism. He had a strong sense of belonging to India as expressed in "Island", "I cannot leave the island / I was born here and belong". He was often perceived as displaying a double impulse, at once alien and a native to India. On the positive side he had the advantage of being both an insider and a foreigner.

The Indian landscape sears my eyes

I have become a part of it

To be observed by foreigners.

I have made my commitments now

This is one: To stay where I am.

("Background Casually")

He expressed modern Indian sensibility in a modern urbane idiom.

The pure invention or the perfect poem,
Precise communication of a thought,
Love reciprocated to a quiver,
Flawless doctrines, certainty of God,
these are merely dreams; but I am human
And must testify to what they mean.

(“A Time to Change”)

He presents a shift from the sentimentalized India of the pre-independence poets and presents a more localized, contemporary India. Bruce King has rightly observed that the difference between Ezekiel’s and earlier Indian poetry is the acceptance that India is a worthwhile subject for poetry but it need not be made sublime by an artificial diction, noble sentiments or aestheticizing its scenes. The ironic, satiric, unselfconsciously personal are not just new notes; they are parts of a different kind of song (114).

Dom Moraes (1938-2004) was born in Mumbai, was studied at Jesus College, Oxford. His father was a reputed journalist and he also became a reputed journalist working for many magazines in the UK, Hong Kong and New York and made documentaries for BBC. He was the first of the post independence Indian poets to get recognition in England. His first book *A Beginning* (1957) won the Hawthorndon prize in 1958. His other major works of poetry are *Poems* (1960), *John Nobody* (1965), *Absences* (1983), *Collected Poems*(1969), *Collected Poems : 1957-1987*(1987) and *Serendip*(1990) which received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1994.

Dom Moraes could never relate to Indian heritage and found himself at home in England. He says that though he was born in India he always lived an English life and never spoke an Indian language. He had a troubled childhood due to his mother Beryl’s mental illness. The first two books express his attempts at coming to terms with this traumatic experience. Influenced by Dylan thomas he wrote a

highly personal poetry. The tone is always confessional and deal with loneliness and insecurity.

Though many critics and reviewers have often considered him the best or one of the best Indian poets, he has always remained on the periphery. He adopted British citizenship in 1961 and willingly disowned Indian heritage and was always critical of India. Most major anthologies have ignored him except *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1997) edited by A K Mehrotra. Moraes disdained the talk of grand Indian heritage as he could not fit in and rather chose to take persona of an exiled traveler. He considers India to be a country 'locked in its dreams'.

Your eyes are not mine.
When I last looked in them
I saw my whole country,
A defeated dream (108)

Jayanta Mahapatra (b. 1928), a bilingual poet, is the first to win the Sahitya Akademi award for poetry in English. He was born in an Odia Christian family in Cuttack, Odisha. After his PhD in physics from Patna College he began his career teaching physics at various colleges in Odisha. He superannuated from Ravenshaw College (now university) . He has authored about twenty seven volumes of poetry including seven in Odia. Some of his poetry collections in English are *Close the Sky Ten by Ten*(1971), *Svayamvara and Other Poems*(1971), *A Father's Hours* (1976), *A Rain of Rites*(1976), *Waiting*(1979), *The False Start* (1980), *Burden of Waves and Fruit*(1988), *The Temple* (1989). He received the Sahitya Akademi Award for 1981 for his book *Relationship* (1980). He founded *Chandrabhaga* a literary bi-annual in 1979. He considers himself to be an Odia poet first. His poetry presents a dialogue with his place and culture. Unlike many Indian poets of the time he does not see English language as being in conflict with the native culture and traditions of India. the conflict in his case is between his unwilling inheritance of a

Christian identity and the grand Hindu heritage he is surrounded with. Thus there is quest for affirming his Odia identity. He presents the contrast between the permanence of our traditions and the urban alienation. In his poem “Bhuvaneshvar” he juxtaposes the ruins of a temple and the urban squalor. He can find his identity only in the place that he inhabits:

A man does not mean anything,
But the place.
Sitting on the river bank, throwing pebbles
into the muddy current
A man becomes the place.

(*Relationship 42*)

A. K. Ramanujan(1929-1993) was born in Mysore and educated at Maharaja’s College, Mysore, Deccan College, Pune and Indiana University, US. Besides being a poet he was a folklorist and translator. He wrote most of his poems while living in the US yet he presents a very Indian experience full of memories of family, places, and traditional Indian family life especially the society of Tamil Brahmins. His books of English verse are *The Striders*(1966), *Relations* (1971), *Selected Poems* (1976), *Second Sight* (1986) and *The Collected Poems* (1995).

His English verse reflects his Kannada and Tamil translations. Even though he taught all his life, except a few initial years, at various universities in the US his poetry is closer home than English moderns. King observes that what may seem like original and modern in his poetry is partly based on Indian poetic conventions.

“The use of the self as a centre of the poem filled with ironies, which unpredictably changes direction and attitudes and which resists conclusion, is within the tradition of medieval saints’ poetry.” (116)

His poetry presents the close knit family life in India. While living in the US he vividly remembers his life back home in India. His poetry evolves out of the tension between the East and the West. Indian myths, culture, history, people and India’s spiritual heritage are the dominant themes. His English poetry has a very strong

influence of Tamil and Kannada verse traditions. “The wordplay, puns, inner rhymes, rhetorical devices, ironies, distanced neutrality of tone, understatement, compression and elliptical progression of the poems have similarity to his translations” (King 116).

In *Relations* he remembers his parents, grandparents, cousins and other relatives. He expresses an inseparable bond with the relatives he left behind in India. In “Of Mothers, Among other Things” he portrays his mother through metaphors showing her youth and then her old age.

“twisted
blackbone tree the silk and white
petal of the (my) mother’s youth”

And her dedication towards her family despite her old age:

“still sensible fingers slowly flex
to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor.”

(*Relations* 61)

Srinivas Rayaprol (1925-1998) was born in Secunderabad and studied at Banaras Hindu University and Stanford University. He started writing English poetry while in the US. On his return he joined government service as an engineer but he stayed committed to his literary pursuits. He is also a bilingual poet writing in English and Telugu. His poetry collections are *Bones and Distances* (1968), *Married Love and Other Poems* (1972), and *Selected Poems* (1995).

His poetry is marked for its immediacy and displays an unprecedented directness.

Every evening
I am met at the gate by my wife

Her hair in disorder and her dress a mess
from the kitchen.

(“Married Love”)

Kamala Das(1934-2009) born in present day Thrissur district of Kerala. Her father was the managing editor of leading Malayalam daily *Matrubhumi* and her mother was a renowned Malayalam poet. She was also a bilingual author writing in Malayalam and English. Her major works of poetry in English are *Summer in Calcutta*(1965), *The Descendants* (1967) and *The Old Play House and Other Poems* (1973). She presents a poetry of personal life in a colloquial language which establishes an intimacy with the readers. She speaks unabashedly and frankly about sexual desires and life of an Indian woman. In her autobiographical verse ‘An Introduction’ she celebrates her individuality and the right to be ‘I’. She accepts her Indianness in being brown and polyglot, defends her use of English, talks about her marriage and love and the quest to live equal as a woman in a male dominated society.

“I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,
I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.
Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,”

(‘An Introduction’)

She writes confessional poetry in the most uninhibited manner.

I also know that by confessing
by peeling off my layers
I reach closer to the soul
and,
to the bone’s

supreme indifference.

(The Old Playhouse 7)

Belonging to a close knit Malabar family, she felt uprooted when her father moved to Calcutta. Even her married life was an unhappy one and she looked outside for love and inside herself for an identity.

I shall some day leave, Leave the cocoon

You built around me....

I shall some day take

Wings, Fly around, as often petals

Do, when free is the air.

(“I Shall Some Day” O.P. 48)

Eunice De Souza (1940-2017), poet, critic, novelist, was born to a Goan catholic family and lived in Pune. She did her masters from Marquette university, Wisconsin, USA and her PhD from University of Mumbai. She taught English literature at St. Xavier’s college, Mumbai. Her poetry collections include *Fix*. (1979), *Women in Dutch Painting* (1988), *Ways of Belonging*(1990), *Selected and New Poems* (1994), *A Necklace Of Skulls* (2009) and most recently *Learn from the Almond Leaf* (2016).

Her poetry is highly charged and concentrated, taut and full of pressure moments. Her first book *Fix* presents images of her Goan Catholic community in Pune. So the poems are about Father Francis X who had seven children, a Goan Aunt, Goan marriages, Christmas parties. Her stance in the first book is aggressive and violent but she becomes gentler and subtler in the later works.

I thought the whole world

was trying to rip me up

cut me down go through me

with a razor blade.

(“Autobiographical” 23)

In *Women in Dutch Painting* she compares the women in Johannes Vermeer’s paintings with those she had met in real life. The women in Dutch paintings of Vermeer and Rembrandt are mostly set in domestic spaces but seem to transcend those spaces through an independent internal life.

The afternoon Sun is on their faces.

They are calm, not stupid,

pregnant, not bovine.

I know women like that

and not just in painting—

(“Women in Dutch Painting” 11)

Melanie Silgado(1956), founder member of publishing co-operative Newground, was born and brought up in Mumbai and lives in the UK. She has also worked in publishing houses in the UK. She’s known for her anthology *These My Words: The Penguin Book of Indian Poetry* (2013, Penguin). She also comes from a Goan Catholic family and studied under Eunice De Souza at Xavier’s College, Mumbai. After her MA in English from the University of Mumbai she studied at the London college of printing and joined Virago (UK) as a commissioning editor. Presently she lives in the UK teaching creative writing and working as a freelance editor. Her poetry collections are *Three Poets* (1978) and *Skies of Design*(1985). Her poetry presents the psychology of self and its relationship with others.

Imtiaz Dharker(b 1954), poet, artist, filmmaker, was born in Lahore, Pakistan and grew up in Glasgow, UK. She married Simon Powell. She describes herself as "Scottish Muslim Calvinist" adopted by India. She presently divides her time between London and Mumbai. Her books of poetry are *Purdah* (1989), *Postcards*

from God (1997), *I speak for the Devil* (2001), *The Terrorist at my Table* (2006), *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009) and *Over the Moon* (2014).

Shiv K. Kumar (1921-2017) finds an India which is repressive of his desires. He looks at the environment and the landscapes around him as extensions of his sexual desire. Kumar published thirteen volumes of poetry including *Articulate Silences* (1970), *Subterfuges* (1976), *Trapfalls in the Sky* (1986) etc. He finds India passive, sexually repressive and with an over-glorified past. He also expresses his angst at the political hypocrisy of India.

R. Parthasarthy (born 1934) represents in independent India what Michael Madhusudan Dutt did almost a century ago. Parthasarthy began hypocritical of everything Indian, 'whoring after English Gods', aiming to settle in England only to return home with a better understanding of India and himself and decided to write only in Tamil. But later he published *Rough Passage* (1977) a collection of his verse in English. The poem is divided into three parts 'Exile' which talks of loss of identity as a result of opposition of two cultures, 'Trial' with love and 'Homecoming'. With reference to exile he says:

"You learn roots are deep;
That language is a tree, loses colour
Under another sky." (17)

Pritish Nandy (b. 1951) is a journalist, film maker, painter and a poet. Nandy has worked as the Publishing Director of *The Times of India* and Editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *Filmfare* magazine. Born to a Bengali family in Bhagalpur, Bihar, he spent his early years in Kolkata studying at La Martinere College and Presidency College. His first collection of poems *Of Gods and Olives* (1967) followed by *On Either Side of Arrogance* (1968) and *Masks to be Interpreted in Terms of Messages* (1971) were published by Writers' Workshop, Calcutta. In the 1970's he published fourteen books of poetry including *Madness is the Second Stroke* (1972), *The Poetry of Pritish Nandy: Collected Poems* (1973),

Riding the Midnight River: Selected Poems (1974) *Dhritarashtra Downtown: Zero* (1974) *Lonesong Street* (1975), *In Secret Anarchy* (1976), *The Nowhere Man* (1976), *A Stranger Called I* (Calcutta, 1976), *Anywhere is Another Place* (1979). More recently he has published *Again* (2010) by Rupa Publications and *Stuck on I/Forty* (2012) by Amaryllis.

His best known and most anthologized poem is *Calcutta If You Must Exile Me* expressing his angst in the most explicit manner against societal decadence. besides most vivid descriptions of the city life, its also noted for its fast tempo and trendsetting style marked for having no punctuation marks.

Calcutta if you must exile me wound my lips before I go
only words remain and the gentle touch of your fingers on my
lips Calcutta burn my eyes before I go into the night
the headless corpse in a Dhakuria bylane the battered youth his brains
blown out and the silent vigil that takes you to Pataldanga lane
where they will gun you down without vengeance or hate

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (b. 1947 Lahore) is best known for his anthology *Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992). His books of poetry include *Nine Enclosures* (1976), *Distance in Statute Miles*(1982), *Middle Earth* (1984), *The Transfiguring Places: Poems* (1998). His *Collected Poems 1969-2014* (2014) is published by Penguin India. He has also translated from Prakrit, Bengali and Hindi. *The Absent Traveller* published by Penguin has his translations of Prakrit love poems.

Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004), born in Kolhapur, Maharashtra is a bilingual poet writing in Marathi and English. His first book of English poems *Jejuri* received the Commonwealth Writers' Award in 1977. His collection of Marathi poems *Bhijki Vahi* also won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2005. He studied at the J J School of Art. He is one of the most anthologized Indian English poet appearing in most major

anthologies of modern Indian poetry in English. After *Jejuri* he next published *The Kala Ghoda Poems* and *Sarpa Satra* quite late in 2004.

Jejuri (1976) is a sequence of 31 poems based on a visit to the temple of Khandoba in the temple town of Jejuri near Pune. Even though it is about a visit to a temple town, it presents Kolatkar's moral vision. There is a sympathetic observation of everything or everyone he comes across. His tone is matter of fact and he appears bemused by whatever he sees.

Dilip Chitre (1938-2009) is another major bilingual poet writing in English and Marathi. He was born to a Marathi family at Baroda in the Erstwhile Baroda state. The family later moved to Mumbai. He was also a painter and filmmaker. He is known as a pioneer of the 'little magazine movement' in Marathi.

Gieve Patel (1940) was born in Mumbai to a Gujarati Family. A poet and playwright, painter, he is a general physician by profession. His poetry represents concern for nature and its conservation. Sometimes poems arise out of his experience as a physician.

With what calm
Liver, lung and heart
Be examined, the bowels
Noted for defect, the brain
For haemorrhage,

(“Post Mortem” *Another Country* 39)

Keki N. Daruwalla (b.1937), an IPS officer by profession, was born in Lahore. His poetry collection *Keeper of the Dead* received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984. Some of his poetry collections are *Under Orion* (1970), *Winter Poems* (1980), *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982), *A Summer of Tigers : poems* (1995) and *The Map-maker* (2002).

Agha Sahid Ali
Rukmini Bhaya Nair

Bibhu Padhi (b.1951) born, brought up and living in Cuttack, Odisha, is also a bilingual poet writing in English and Oriya. He taught English literature at the Ravenshaw University, Cuttack. Some of his poetry collections are *Going to the Temple* (1988), *A Wound Elsewhere* (1992), *Lines From A Legend* (1993), *Painting the House* (1999), *Games the Heart Must Play*: a trilogy in of love poems(2003), *Choosing A Place* (2011), *Migratory Days* (2011), *Brief Seasons: 60 love songs* (2013), *Magic Ritual* (2014) and *Midnight Diary* (2015). Padhi's poems are inward looking and express a sense of loss. His poems have images from everyday life like a power cut, listening to the rain, or even a dead sparrow. His quest for self is limited to the place that he belongs to and his family. He presents the nature and landscape of Puri and Cuttack in his poems.

The sea increases.
Now the long thin border of faith,
now the still rim of its distant blue
now the loud green beating the sand.

(“Sunrise at Puri-on-sea” 5)

As the summer wind sails over my body
it makes me its own.

(“Summer Evening in Cuttack” 12)

Jayanta Mahapatra and Bibhu Padhi along with some other poets like Niranjana Mohanty have created a distinct Odia identity with their overwhelming use of Odia myths, culture and landscape.

Pre-independence Indian poets writing in English, except a few lesser known poets writing between 1920-1947, almost exclusively came from upper class Brahmin or Kayastha and Christian convert families in Bengal. The modern poets come from middle class families and are mostly based at Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi or abroad with some exceptions like Mehrotra from Allahabad. This geographical spread continues to expand as English language education gets more accessible across the nation. Now many new poets come from remote parts like the north eastern states.

The language: The history of Indian poetry in English till recently has largely been the history of coming to terms with the English language. While the earliest writers, invariably prose writers, chose English as a means to counter the prevalent misinterpretations of India in the contemporary English writings, the subsequent generations have grappled with linguistic, cultural and political issues related to writing poetry in a language which is not the first language of the land. The language of poetic expression in the nineteenth century is still considered a ‘mistress’ of mixed origin in the twentieth century.

In his 1982 volume *The Keeper of the Dead* Daruwalla talks about his relationship with the language.

No one believes me when I say
my mistress is half- caste. Perched
on the genealogical tree somewhere
is a Muslim midwife and a Goan cook.
But she is more mixed than that.
Down the genetic lane, babus
and professors of English
have also made their one- night contributions
(‘The Mistress’ ll. 1-8, *The Keeper of the Dead*)

Even though he loves the language he finds it hard to project his thoughts in Indian English. The poet says:

My love for her survives from night to night,
even though each time
I have to wrestle with her in bed (ll. 20-22)

It is clear that the persona has a repulsive attitude towards the language, but still he accepts the language and reveals his mistress thus:

She is Indian English, the language that I use. (l. 37)

The insertion of English into the pre-English 'Indian' or South Asian semiosphere created asymmetry and unpredictability of its own kind and hence 'English' becomes the language of self description by the system's core and remains asymmetrical.

The cultural semiotic presented by Indian poetry in English is a result of the dialogue between a language and many cultures including the one primarily associated with it. And this process is shaped by changing point of views of the participants of the cultures involved and the changing power relationships between the contesting cultures and within the participants of the individual cultures. When Jones and other British civil servants brought the language to India and started writing poetry in 'Native English' and used it to present metaphors drawn from India and its indigenous culture. English literature as we know it today was not accorded the same respect that it acquired later as a result of conscious efforts driven by colonial motives. The literature in Britain, as Jones himself claimed, was suffering from a literary sterility and was desperately looking for fresh narratives and metaphors from the orient. At this stage the language of poetry remained native British fused with Indian myths and metaphors. There were no questions of language choice or the later discourses of the politics of using English as a medium of creative expression as these British officers were writing in the only language they knew.

Language became an issue when Indian poets began writing in English as the language of their creative expression was neither their primary language nor the language of the culture that they were participants of. While the prose writers of the period had political reasons for using the language, the poets merely focussed on the aesthetics. This led to a sort of devaluing of prose as a creative genre. In this counter- prose environment the language had to be as close to the native structure or perceived standard as the British masters would have liked. Around the same time Macaulay's famous Minute on Education was delivered on 2nd February 1835 stating that it was necessary to 'make the natives of this country good English scholars'. As a consequence Government resolution of 7th March 1835 declared that 'the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.' Thus English language and literature was consciously and strategically promoted in India. The high appreciation of ancient Sanskrit texts by indophiles like Jones and romantic poets in England almost to the exclusion of literatures in other Indian languages created a sense of vacuum of literary enterprise in India which could only be 'aptly' filled by English literature. Over a period of time this reversed the trend, so instead of the British learning the metres of Indian poetry, the Indian poets began looking towards the west for suitable poetic forms. Back home in England English literature which was never considered worthy of being taught at a university suddenly became the most sought after course as civil servants coming to India had to be well versed with it. This discourse of English literature as the subject of opportunity probably trickled down to British subjects in India who also by now firmly believed in the primacy of English literary forms. Thus the indigenous poets in India resisted the nativisation of English language and followed English poetic forms. The trend lasted pretty much till India gained independence. Barring a few examples, the language of poetry at the phonological, syntactic and pragmatic-symbolic level followed the language primarily associated with English culture. Thus there was a discord between the language and the indigenous culture in India.

Even the use of Indian myths and metaphors seem superficial. Indian poetry in English before independence thus failed to create any definitive place amongst literatures in India or abroad.

Though the first poetic work by an Indian was Cavally Venkata Ramaswami's English translation of *Viswagunadarsana* (1825), a Sanskrit poem but being a translation it cannot be considered an original composition. Thus the first Indian poet writing in English is Henry Vivian Derozio(1809-30) though not considered an ethnic Indian. He published two volumes of poetry : *Poems*(1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera, A Metrical Tale, and Other Poems*(1828). As Naik observes his shorter poems show a strong influence of British romantic poets in theme, sentiment, imagery and even diction(24). Even his longer narrative poem , "The Fakeer of Jungheera", shows a clear affinity with Byron. The poem tells the tale of the tragic life of Nuleeni, a Hindu widow. He skilfully uses varying English metres to present the changing tones of the tale culminating in the description of the funeral pyre of Nuleeni. A very Indian cultural image of the funeral pyre is captured through the chants of the priests and women presented in trochaic and dactylic. Even though Derozio was a Eurasian by origin, born of an Indo-Portuguese father and an English mother, he brings nationalistic fervour in his expressions. He wrote poems like 'To India- My Native Land', 'The Harp of India' and can be credited for using the term 'Mother India' for the first time. At the same time he remained a staunch critic of some of the Indian traditions such as '*sati*'. He at once uses Indian myths, legend, imagery, diction and also western classical myths. His racial-cultural hybridity seems to correspond with his hybridisation of poetry. But he greatly influenced the later generations of Indian poets writing in English through his variety of metrical tones and verse forms and invented imagery which helped naturalize and aestheticize Indian landscape in the English language.

Kashiprasad Ghose(1809-73) was the first with a clear Indian ethnicity to publish his volume of English verse *The Shair or Minstrel and Other Poems*(1830). Having formally studied English literature and claiming to have mastered English

metres, he obviously composed poetry which strictly adhered to English verse metres but lacked authentic imagination. Even attempts to use Indian cultural symbols such as the Hindu festivals failed owing to his lack of poetic talent. Some other poets who remained undistinguished are Rajnarain Dutt, Shoshee Chunder Dutt.

Michael Madhusudhan Dutt (1824-73) was the first of the Indian poets to write in English and then get disillusioned with European culture and come back to writing in the mother tongue. As far as his English poems are concerned he goes beyond a fusing of English prosody and Indian content. He for the first time attempts to bend the language itself so that it could convey the verbal and syntactic 'flavour' of Sanskrit, Persian and Bengali poetic sensibilities as precisely as possible (Dharwadker, 2001). Besides some sonnets and shorter poems, he wrote two long poems in English, "The Captive Ladie"(1849) dealing with the theme of Rajput King Prithviraj's abduction of Kannauj King's daughter and "Visions of the Past"(1849) presenting the Christian theme of fall and redemption of man. He very soon moved to writing in Bengali where he established himself as a major playwright and poet.

The Dutt Family Album(1870), a family anthology of poems, consisting of poems by three brothers Govin Chunder, Hur Chunder and Greece Chunder and their cousin Omesh Chunder, continues to echo the romantic poets of England in form, metre, symbols and sentiment. Romesh Chunder Dutt(1848-1909) who wrote in both English and Bengali had clearly decided the language of his choice. He wrote creative works in Bengali and English verse were merely translations. Though for critical and reflective prose he uses English. He translated from Sanskrit and Persian classics and attempts to be true to the music of the originals by finding equivalent metres in English where he miserably fails. But the first bilingual poet in the true sense was Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Barring a few exceptions he always wrote in Bengali and then did a creative translation in English. His verse is highly lyrical easily lending to music even though they may not be as song like

as the Bengali originals. Naik observes that his attitude to writing in English remains ambivalent. He writes to his niece, “ I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado; I simply felt an urge to recapture, through the medium of another language, the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in past days.’ And again, in another place, he declares, ‘I was possessed by the pleasure of receiving anew my feelings as expressed in a foreign tongue. I was making fresh acquaintance with my own heart.’ Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) presents a blend of romanticism and Persian and Urdu poetry. Her attempts at capturing the folk music of India in her poetry give her poetry an unmatched singing quality. Though she also continues to imitate romantic diction, she infuses it with a rich Indian imagery and musical charm of the folk songs.

Joseph Furtado(1872-1947), though considered a minor poet, is probably the first to show signs of nativisation of English. He was the first to use Pidgin English in expressions such as

‘Sly rogue, the Old Irani!
Has made a lakh, they say-
A lakh in land and money-
By mixing milk with **pani**.
...She thinks I be some rajah-
...Wouldn’t mind a little **majah**.’ (*The Old Irani*)

He uses pidgin for comic purposes but it initiated a process which has lasted almost three quarters of a century.

By the mid of the 20th century poets were affirming their faith in using English as a language of creative expression though under attack from the critics. Writers Workshop founded by P. Lal and his associates declared that it was a group of writers ‘who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian Literature, through original writings and transcreation.’ Post- independence, as the issue of language and ‘Hindi imperialism’ was predominant in political discourse, the issue of English as the

language of poetry was also under attack. Lal sought an answer through his 'Credo' in response to which many IE poets of the time justified their use of the language. A.K. Ramanujan's probably sums up the responses, 'I don't think people who write have a choice in the matter. It may be that an Indian writing in English condemns himself to writing minor marginal verse. But I don't think anybody can choose either in Bengali or in English to write major verse or any verse at all worth the name.' Amalendu Bose(1970) in his review of Lal's anthology and credo, divides the poets into three categories, those who have English as their mother tongue or as good as one, those who have grown up in multi-lingual situations in which English has exercised a constancy of impact on their communicative powers; and others whose affiliation to the Indian mother-tongue remains undiminished though they find in English a happy medium for their poetic utterance.

More recently the poets have finally come to terms with the language and Jeet Thayil declares in '*English*' :

“English fills my right hand, silence my left.”

Polyglossia and multiculturalism define Indian poetry in English. A shift from the earlier unifying essentialist ideologies to 'multiculturalism' in the recent times have helped us relook at IE poetry as an inter-play of diverse cultures. The 'multiculturalism' here is not just a co-existence of poets belonging to multiple ethnic identities but also individuals drawing their significations from multiple cultures. Most IE poets have had access to multiple cultures as either they are dislocated from their native place or have travelled and worked for considerable time in other countries. This poetry could very well be called 'Transnational' poetry. 'Exile' or 'alienation' remains a recurrent trope in IE poetry ever since its inception.

The Canon: For long the central debate has been if there is any specific body of literature which can be justifiably called Indian English Literature. Today in this post- global age we can look back from a vantage point at the development of the so called IE Literature without getting caught in the radical divide between the

‘nationalists’ and ‘internationalists’. Lotman while discussing the self organization of culture says that “the selection of a certain number of texts from the mass of [...] messages can be considered as indicating the emergence of a culture as a special form of self organization of society”. This selection of nuclear texts to define the cultural identity may be considered the process of canon formation. The canon of Indian English poetry has been shaped through the various anthologies published by the writers/publishers who were poets themselves and had allegiance to certain politics of literature. As Makarand Paranjape observes that though politics may make literature, literature has its own politics, the politics of language, of identity, of influence and of self justification.

Poets of John Company (1921) by Theodore Douglas Dunn is one of the earliest works which collected colonial poetry in English though he treated Indian poets separately from the British ones in another collection titled *The Bengali Book of English Verse* (1918). Dunn included Derozio’s ‘On the Abolition of Suttee’ in the anthology, considering him as Anglo-Indian. *Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1927) edited by Gwendoline Goodwin and published in London is a collection of poems written originally in English and translations from other Indian languages by contemporary poets. The anthology is important as it for the first time labels English poetry from India as ‘Indian Poetry’.

This Strange Adventure: An Anthology of Poems in English by Indians 1828-1946 (1947) edited by Fredoon Kabraji and published by New India Publishing Company, London. Fredoon Kabraji was a poet himself and lived in the UK for almost thirty years he had great love for English.

Post- independence, IE literature was under immense pressure to prove its validity, originality or reasons for existence. The first modernist anthology was *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry* (1958) by P Lal and K. Raghavendra Rao in the introduction to which the editors declare that the ‘phase of indo-anglian romanticism has ended’ and the new poets must write a poetry that dealt in

‘concrete terms with concrete experiences’. P. Lal in *Modern Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology and a Credo* (1969) sought to defend the use of English through the ‘Credo’ part. The credo part was occasioned because of an article by Buddhadeva Bose’s article in *The Concise Encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry* (1963) in which he says ‘Indo Anglian poetry is a blind alley, lined with curio-shops, leading nowhere’ almost signalling worthlessness of any such enterprise. The ‘credo’ presented personal statements by selected poets on why they chose to write in English. Lal’s anthology included 132 poets and this very inclusivity was charged with promoting mediocrity by later anthologists. Most of these poets including Lal were excluded from later anthologies.

The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry, 1828-1965 (1970) by V. K. Gokak is considered the most comprehensive collection of poetry in English written by Indians. It anthologises 108 Indian poets writing in English from Derozio(1809-1831) to Kamla Das (1934-2009). The very title of the anthology is modelled on the Francis Turner Palgrave’s anthology ‘The Golden Treasury of English Songs and Lyrics (1861) as Gokak himself admits in the preface to the second edition. Post colonial critics would label it as ‘colonial mimicry’.

Saleem Peeradina’s anthology *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English: An Assessment and Selection*(1972) attacks Lal for promoting mediocrity and includes only fourteen poets. Other notable anthologies such as R. Parthasarthy’s *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*(1976), Keki N. Daruwalla’s *Two Decades of Indian Poetry(1960-1980)*(1980), Vilas Sarang’s *Indian English Poetry Since 1950*(1989), and A K Mehrotra’s *The Oxford India Anthology: Twelve Modern Indian Poets*(1992), have also tried to be exclusive and continued to present critical assessments of the poets. Though most modern anthologies have ignored Sarojini Naidu and Aurobindo, Makarand Paranjape’s *Indian Poetry in English*(1993) is the only one to include both. Gauri Deshpande’s *An Anthology of Indo-English Poetry*(1974), Pritish Nandy’s *Indian Poetry in English : 1947-1972*(1972), *Indian Poetry in English Today*(1973) and *Strangertime: An Anthology of Indian Poetry*

in English(1977) restrict themselves to the ‘moderns’- those who did their best writing during and after 1950s. Paranjape in *An Anthology of New Indian English Poetry*(1993), almost categorically states that modernism is dead. Kaiser Haq’s *Contemporary Indian Poetry*(1990) is the first substantial anthology of post independence Indian poetry in English to be published in the west.

K. Ayyapa Paniker’s *Modern Indian Poetry in English*(1991) published by Sahitya Akademi, the official academy of letters in India, signals official recognition of what constituted ‘Indian poetry in English’. This anthology includes twenty poets Meena Alexander(1951-2018), Keki N. Daruwalla(born 1937), Kamala Das(1934-2009), Gauri Deshpande(1942-2003), Nissim Ezekiel(1924-2004), K R Srinivasa Iyengar(1908-1999), Adil Jussawala(born 1940), K D Katrak(1936-2008), Arun Kolatkar(1932-2004), Shiv K Kumar(1921-2017), P Lal(1929-2010), Jayanta Mahapatra(1928), A K Mehrotra(1947), Dom Moraes(1938-2004), Pritish Nandy(born 1951), R Parthasarathy(1934), Gieve Patel(1940), Saleem Peeradina(1944), A K Ramanujan(1929-1993), Vikram Seth(1952). An enumeration of names was needed here as it is these twenty poets who have been routinely anthologised and thus constitute the ‘canon’ of Indian Poetry in English.

60 Indian Poets (2008 Penguin) by Jeet Thayil covers, as name suggests, sixty poets since independence . The list begins with Nissim Ezekiel and includes names like Adil Jussawala, Arun Kolatkar, C. P. Surendra. The collection excludes Agha Sahid Ali and Sujata Bhatt.

Anthologies act like auto-communicative devices. Most of these anthologies were by poets themselves (Gokak’s being an exception) and since Lal’s anthology have followed the norm of having a detailed defence of the poets in the introduction. As most of them have more or less included the same set of poets thus defined the canon and also the self description of the semiosphere or the culture of Indian poetry in English by fixing the boundaries.

We can witness the emergence of alternative literary canons of Indian poetry in English in anthologies such as which have exclusively given voice to women poets such as Eunice De Souza's *Nine Indian Women Poets* (1999) or those presenting contemporary voices such as Ranjit Hoskote's *Reasons for Belonging* (2002). *Nine Indian Women Poets* includes Tara Patel, Kamala Das, Imtiaz Dharker, Charmayne D'Souza, Melanie Silgado, Mamta Kalia, Sujata Bhatt, Smita Agarwal, and Eunice de Souza. Hoskote's anthology has fourteen contemporary poets who were born between 1959 and 1971. The poets included in this latter anthology are Jeet Thayil, Tabish Khair, Ranjit Hoskote, Vijay Nambisan, H Masud Taj, Rukmini Bhaya Nair, C P Surendran, Vivek Narayanan, Gavin Barrett, Anjum Hasan, Jerry Pinto, Smita Agarwal, Arundhati Subramaniam and Anand Thakore. These poets represent the second and the third generation of post colonial poets. What marks their difference as Hoskote himself notes is that "they feel no obligation to prove their Indianness to nativist detractors who, arguing from an essentialist model of cultural identity, vilify Indian literature in English as being 'inauthentic' and 'alienated' from its context." They savour the uses of hybridity and are at ease with the cultural condition.