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NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Indian Poetry in English

Lecture 02: Introduction to Indian English Poetry Part II

BINOD MISHRA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Beginning of Indian English Poetry

- Englishmen who came to India
- Educated Middle class
- Modern Westernized Professionals
- People raised in families where English was spoken.
- Daughters of progressive fathers.
- Mostly poets marginal to traditional Hindu Society (Parsis, Jews, Christians, poets alienated by their English-Language, rebels, living abroad).

Besides, remember I am writing for that portion of my countrymen who think as I think, whose minds have been more or less imbued with western ideas and modes of thinking."- Madhusudan Dutt



Poetic Groups

Bombay poets



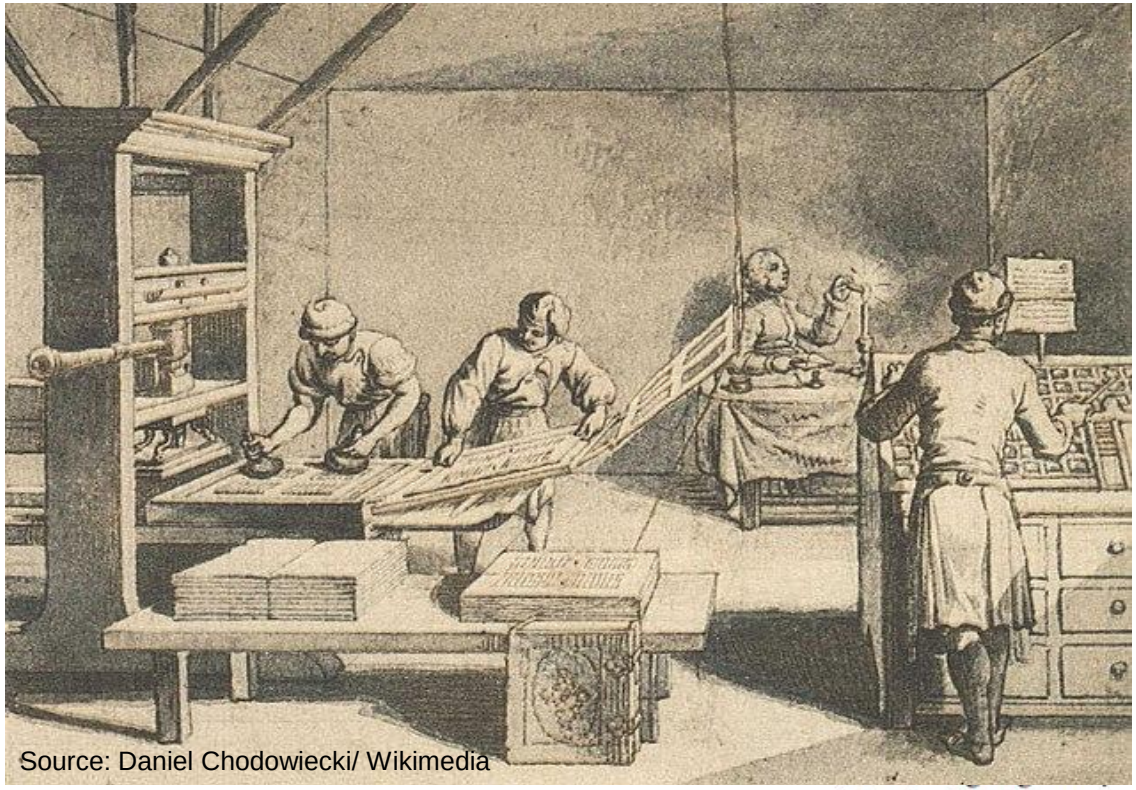
Calcutta Poets



English, Marathi, Sanskrit, Hindi, Spanish

Indian English Writing & Socio-Political Conditions

- Second World War after the end of Colonialism.
- Indian Poetry in English did not culturally led movements inspiring national Independence.
- Conflict of Interests with Nationalists, Intellectuals, Cultural Conservatives, and Regionalist.
- Poetry of the pre-independence period was discontinuous.
- **C.R Mandy**, an Irishman, who was the editor of *Illustrated Weekly* transformed the journal to one more appropriate to the newly-independent India (King, 2012, p12).



Source: Daniel Chodowiecki/ Wikimedia

"And with this new dawn of life came into the country one of the mightiest instruments of civilization, the printing-press.'

(Bankimchandra Chatterjee,

Contd…

- Writers Workshop founded in 1958
- In 1960 Sahitya Akademi accepted English as a national Language.
- Identified with many various appellations.
- English language was being Indianized.
- It became the ‘link’ language for inter-regional communication.



Periods of Indian Poetry in English

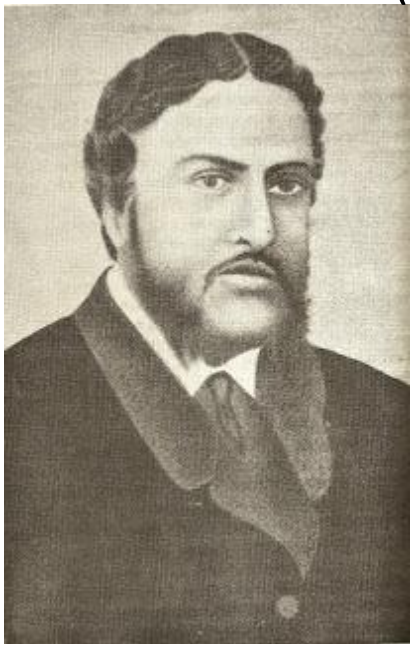
- Poems by the British

- Early Poets
- The Poets post-Independence
- Modern Poets



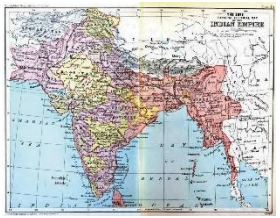
Influence of Western Tradition

('Not admirable but worth studying'-Metta)

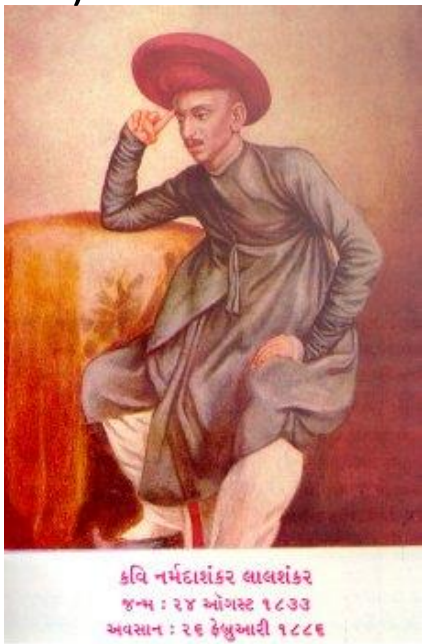


Michael Madhusudan Dutt'

What did the early poets and scholars opine?



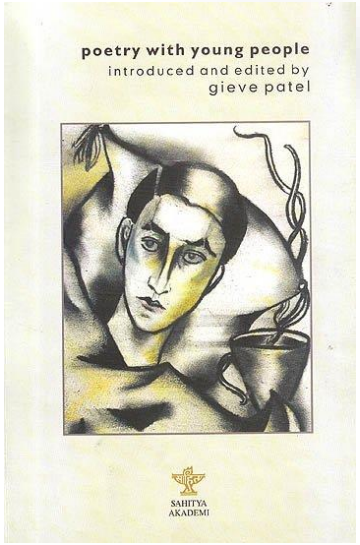
'India became a province of European learning.'



"Kavi ani Kavita"

Contd…





Adopt Phase

(Inherited from the West)

Adapt Phase

(Experimenting with age)

Adept Phase

(Freedom from oppressive and overwhelming style of the past)



(in.pintereset.com)

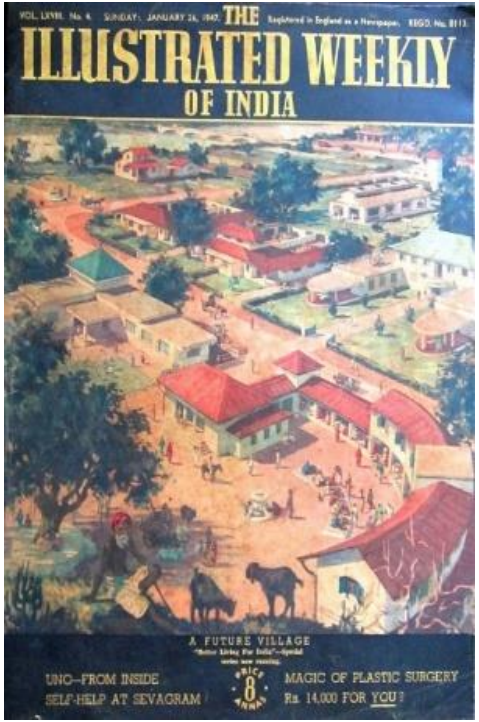
Characteristics of Indian English Poetry

- Modern perspective than traditional (older Indian devotional verse)
- It has gone from the phase of adopt, adapt to adept.
- It encompasses different kinds of sensibilities and expressive styles.
- Recognized in Modern Indian culture and a part of the process of Modernization.



Contd…

- Popularized through journals and book publications brought out by poets like P. Lal, Nandy, Nissim Ezekiel and others.
- Influenced in technique and theme by the major twentieth-century modernists as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, French experimental poetry from the nineteenth-century Rimbaud and Lautreamont, Dadaists and surrealists, political poetry of Neruda (King, 2012).
- Decrease in distance between moral reflection and actuality.





Comparing the Traditions in India

It seems to me as if the world of the day is European music…a huge forceful tangle of *harmony*, and the world of the night is our Indian music, a pure, tender, serious, unmixed *ragini*…We Indians live in that kingdom of night. We are entranced by that which is timeless and whole. Ours is the song of personal solitude, Europe's is that of social accompaniment. (Tagore, in Chaudhuri: 136)

Early Writings in English by an Indian

- Cavilla Venkata Ramaswami's English rendering of *Viswagunadarsana* of Avasanipala Venkatadhvarin , an early 17th century Sanskrit poem, is supposedly the earliest verse in English by an Indian, though being a translation.
- Dean Mahomed (1759-1859) published *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* in 1794, the first book ever written by an Indian in English.

The First Indian English poet

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio



(1809-31)

- First Indian English Poet
- Portuguese Descent
- Anglo Indian Mother
- English Romantic Poets : Byron, Scott, Shelly, Keats
- Greek and Indian Mythology
- *The Fakir of Jungheera (1828)*

Contd...

“ Why is it that literature doesn’t flourish in this country--- is the soil or the climate uncongenial to the culture of so delicate a flower– or is there a paucity of those talents which are necessary to accelerate its growth? … there is something that withers it in spite of every effort, and every care. What it is , I have never yet satisfactorily ascertained. (Derozio under his pen name “Juvenis”)

Sonnet: “To the Rozunigundha”

The fragrance comes upon my heart as ’twere
A love-breathed sigh from bashful maiden fair,
So sweet, so soft. My inmost raptured sense
Of bounteous Nature feels th’ omnipotence.
Thou art like Goodness, – by the cold world’s eye
Unseen, unfelt; while breezes pass thee by,
Receiving a rich boon from thy sweet breast –
An odour like the breath of angels blest:

Contd...

Thus, like petitioners they wake the sigh
Of incense pure from gentle Charity,
That from her home in shades unseen, unknown
Bestows her bounties, blest by those alone
Who feel their influence – the world ne'er knows
Where and for whom that flower of sweetness blows! (ll. 1–14)

Contd…

- Derozio and his pupils were accused of cutting their way through ham and beef and wading to liberation through tumblers of beer.
- ‘the national bard of modern India’ (E.F. Oaten)

❑ Kashiprasad Ghosh(1809-73)

- *The Shair or Minstrel & Other Poems*(1830)
- "The Boatman’s Song to Ganga”

Poems (1827)
The Fakeer of Jungheera (1828)
The Harp of India
My Native Land
The Eclipse
A Walk by Moonlight
Song of the Hindustani Minstrel

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73)

- An epoch-making writer in Bengali
- Early career as an English poet
- Embraced Christianity
- Introduced Miltonic free verse

The Captive Ladie (1849)
Visions of the Past (1849)
Razia, Empress of Inde(1858)
Sermista (1859)

" I acknowledge to you, and I need not blush to do so--- that I love the language of the Anglo-Saxon. Yes– I love the language– the glorious language of the Anglo-Saxon. My imagination visions forth before me the language of the Anglo-Saxon in all its radiant beauty; and I feel silenced and abashed."

The Path Breakers

- Infused Indian sensibility into the body of verses.
- Disowned the conventional western models.
- Discovered their own style.



“There is no such thing as ‘Indian Food’; the term can only be defined as an amalgam of several food-styles, just as Indian Literature is the sum-total of literatures written in a dozen or more languages.”

-Buddhadeva Bose

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Thank You