IIT ROORKEE

FREE ONLINE EDUCATION swayam शिक्षित भारत, उन्नत भारत

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Indian Poetry in English

Lecture: 15 Adil Jussawalla

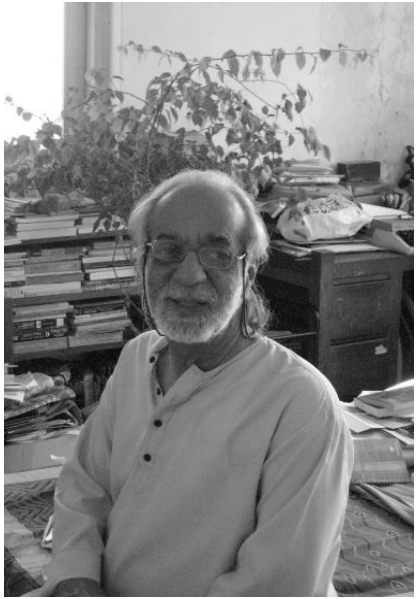
BINOD MISHRA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



Introduction

- Born in Bombay, 1940 in Parsi Zoroastrian Community
- Early education in Bombay, moved to England in 1957 to study Architecture but took a degree in English at Oxford.
- Experienced violent culture shock during 1957-1970, his stay in England.
- In the 1970s, along with poets Adil Jussawalla, Gieve Patel and Arun Kolatkar, Mehrotra founded the Bombay poetry publishing collective **Clearing House**. He was a founder-editor also to **Praxis**.
- Poetry readings sessions: “Dangerous Animals” and “Loquations.”



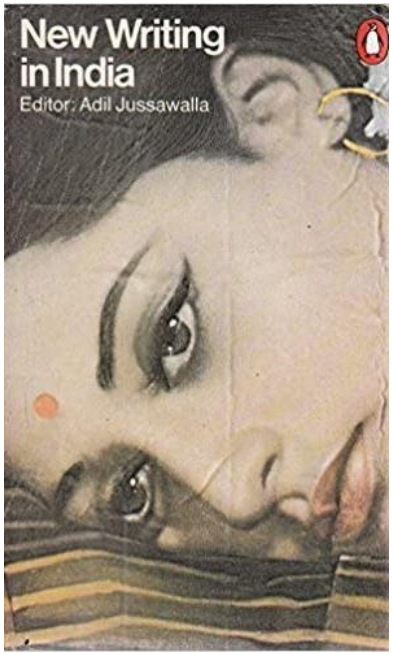
Contd…

- Brought up in a multi-lingual world.
- A feeling of marginality and foreignness.
- Married a French woman, Veronik.
- “I cannot get away from the fact that, whatever I do, I will be a kind of oppressor, a parasite, living off the fat of the land.” (Jussawalla)
- “That woman stumbling from a Christmas pub in tears, her spectacles broken, that girl cringing outside Harrods, that black man wiping tears with fistfuls of snow, are squatters. They enter my body, so long an empty house. They take possession of its floors” (“Wondering”, TSG, p. 21).

Works

- *Land's End* (1962)
- *Missing Person* (1974)
- *Trying to Say Goodbye (2011)*
- *The Right Kind of Dog (2013)*

- *Chyakravuya*
- *New Writing in India, ed.* (1974)
- *Maps for a Mortal Moon* (2014)



Land's End (1962)

- Influenced by Christian imagery, Rimbaud,
- and T. S. Eliot..
- Contrasts geographical place in England with
- Christian belief in God.
- "Seventeen" ,
- "November Day"
- "31st December 58"
- "The Moon and Cloud at Easter"
- "The Suburb"
- "The Dolls"
- Banalities of modern life juxtaposed with Christian symbols.
- Sense of exile and alienation.

Here in the cramped, pig's-footed county at last
Where seas grip, the airs kick and squall,
Atlantic breakers boom, the sea-gulls fall
Downwind to sheets of spray, the fast
Seas race, roil, slump and shower
Across the thrusted coastland; where brine-wings beat
The rooted perch of weeds and brine-wings bite
Raw rock or nerve exposed to their brute power,
Land's End or Faith's – what must I call
This faulted coast Atlantic breakers pound?
Wave after wave explodes, hour by hour
To undermine my numbed and bulwarked ground.

Characteristics of His Poems

- Intellectual longing for roots.
- The tensions of belonging, and the temptation of silence.
- In 'The New Poetry,' Jussawalla describes his poetry trying 'to show the effects of living in lands I can never leave nor love properly to belong to.'
- Uses Modernist techniques like collage, montage, fragmentation, piling of images.
- Past filled with vitality belief and wonder but modern life as sterile.
- Radical social awareness.

"The horror of bad things happening all the time, of living in a cruel present, often leaves me speechless."

“The Waiter”

Blacker than wine from the loaded grapes of France,
Blacker than mud their Tamil minds recall,
Dark skins serving dishes to the sallow
Sweat more night than grapes blood has. All
The long summers they abjured, for chance
Of better prospects, change, a sun of contrast,
Stick in a language their clients won’t allow.
Must button up their manners with the past.

Contd...

Grow expert on the epicure’s stuffed heart,
Polite of speech, punctilious, guarded, kind.
As guardians of good taste, these waiters know
The soiled and cluttered kitchens of the mind,
The rancid oils where sweeter dishes start,
Cooked, like a pick-up’s words, the soot-black roof
Behind our pasted smiles: their darkness grew
To insight in their day; they stand aloof.

Contd…

But slacken in their service after eleven.
Guarding the day's unending appetites,
Grow shifty-eyed, avoid our munching faces,
The spit and polish of our eating rites.
Then closing time: they dream of a foodless heaven,
Shrug off their coats like priestly cloaks of pity,
Day's ministry complete. Slip to their sleeping places
In the throat of the feasted, pink-faced city.

Analysis of the Poem “The Waiter”

- Racism and political content.
- Colonial chaos
- Alienation and disappointment.
- Extensive use of colour images.
- The waiters stand separate from the ones they serve.
- Contemporary cross-cultural consciousness.
- Feeling of marginality and foreignness.

“Sea Breeze, Bombay”

Partition’s people stitched
Shrouds from a flag, gentlemen scissored Sind.
An opened people, fraying across the cut
country reknotted themselves on this island.

Surrogate city of banks,
Brokering and bays, refugees’ harbour and port,
Gatherer of ends whose brick beginnings work
Loose like a skin, spotting the coast,

Contd…

Restore us to fire. New refugees,
Wearing blood-red wool in the worst heat,
come from Tibet, scanning the sea from the north,
Dazed, holes in their cracked feet.

Restore us to fire. Still,
Communities tear and re-form; and still, a breeze,
Cooling our garrulous evenings, investigates nothing,
Ruffles no tempers, uncovers no root,

And settles no one adrift of the mainland’s histories.

Analysis of Poem “Sea Breeze, Bombay”

- Violence, chaos and pain
- Colonial, racial, and sexual stereotypes
- Picture of dislocation then relocation
- Bombay as a home to many uprooted natives
- Sufferings of the word
- Poems in *Missing Person* is described by the poet as “poems of exile, cultural displacement and loss; a voice that is both angry and lyrical; a focus on post-Frantz Fanon man, at odds with his real and historical selves” (p.251). -*Zecchini*

Missing Person (1976)

- Book divided into three groups : *Missing Person* sequence (poems written in 1975), This Room and That (1962-72), Travelling Separately (between 1975 and 1975)
- Problems of modern man, extreme fragmentation.
- Yearning for home
- The first group comprises 14 selections (representing autobiography), the second has 07 poems different points of view of the missing person unable to solve the problem of identity.

Jussawall's Growing Awareness

"While the *Land's End* lyrics, written in England, expresses his sense of isolation, the 'Missing Person' sequence explores his relation to India. The persona of a middle class Indian intellectual is created and then viewed as a victim of colonialism, being seen ironically as representative of the bourgeois romantic fated to be inconsequential and dissatisfied by circumstances, upbringing and an inability to understand the contradiction between longings and what might be solutions." (Bruce King)

from *Missing Person*

‘that speeding train—
It is my life.
Those are my hands---
Split –ends of sabotage.’
Again and again , buttonholes friends
Turned strangers, strangers friends:
‘Believe , that’s me on the screen—
Through the stuttering dust, through the burst open door.’
The running dog runs but they have put out its eyes.
‘Once I was whole, I was all.
Believe , why don’t you believe?’ (1.2)

“Approaching Santa Cruz Airport, Bombay”

Loud benedictions of the silver popes,
A cross to themselves, above
A union of homes as live as a disease.
Still, though the earth be stunk and populous,
We're told it's not: our Papa'll put his nose
Down on cleaner ground. Soon to receive
Its due, the circling heart, encircled, sees
The various ways of dying that are home.

‘Dying is all the country's living for,'
A doctor says. ‘We've lost all hope, all pride.'
I peer below. The poor, invisible,
Show me my place; that, in the air,
With the scavenger birds, I ride.

Contd…

Economists enclosed in History's
Chinese boxes, citing Chairman Mao,
Know how a people nourished on decay
Disintegrate or crash in civil war.

Contrarily, the Indian diplomat,
Flying with me, is confident the poor
Will stay just as they are.
Birth
Pyramids the future with more birth.
Our only desert, space; to leave the green
Burgeoning to black, the human pall.
The free
Couples in their chains around the earth.

I take a second look. We turn,
Grazing the hills and catch a glimpse of sea.
We are now approaching Santa Cruz: all
Arguments are endless now and I
Feel the guts tighten and all my senses shake.
The heart, stirring to trouble in its clenched
Claw, shrivelled inside the casing of a cage
Forever steel and foreign, swoops to take
Freedom for what it is. The slums sweep
Up to our wheels and wings and nothing's free
But singing while the benedictions pour
Out of a closing sky. And this is home,
Watched by a boy as still as a shut door,
Holding a mass of breadcrumbs like a stone.

Contd…

Critics' view of Jussawalla

- Jussawalla's usual strategy in *Land's End* is to project a clearly visualized situation and then comment on it, bringing out either the personal or social or existential significance latent in it. –Naik
- 'The living memory of Bombay'- Zecchini
- 'Poet of Exile'- G. S Amur
- 'Poetry of exile and return'- Bruce King
- Mehrotra remarked in his sensitive review of Maps for a Mortal Moon,
- "Jussawalla, like Kolatkar, is another flâneur of the streets and lanes of
- Colaba.
- His poetry as "the craft of despair."-Anand Thakore
- "like entering an echo-chamber. (Mehrotra)

Conclusion

- His early works reflect his ambition of becoming an English poet.
- Aware of contemporary social and political realities.
- His poetry is not immediately transparent, but oblique, complex, and, at times, enigmatic. It is Ironic but transforming.
- His language is abrupt and lines stammer. Abundance of disconnected images and elliptical sentences.
- His poems move from tragedy to comedy or from silence to chaos.
- He is a true Indian poet who aims at recovering his faith and return to his roots.

Summing up

Upset like water
I dive for my favourite tree
Which is no longer there
Though they have let its root remain.

Dry clods of earth
Tighten their tiny faces
In an effort to cry. Back
Where I was born.
I may yet observe my own birth. (Nine poems on Arrival)

Thank You

Works Consulted

King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, Ninth Impression, 2012.

Prasad, Hari Mohan. *Indian Poetry in English.* India: Trinity Press, 2015.

Sarang, Vilas. *Indian English Poetry, Since 1950: An anthology,* Hyderabad: Disha Books, 1990.

Thakore, Anand. "On the Music of 'A Missing Person': Adil Jussawalla and the Craft of Despair," *Poetry International Archives*, 2004, www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/couarticle/item/2690.

Zecchini, Laetitia. "Adil Jussawalla and the Double Edge of Poetry". *A History of Indian Poetry in English*, ed. Rosinka Chaudhuri, New York: CUP, 2016.