IIT ROORKEE

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NPTEL

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Indian Poetry in English

Lecture: 40 Summary

Bridging the Gaps

BINOD MISHRA

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



The Aim of the Course

- To realize the journey of Indian English poetry the way it started and continues to make its presence felt.
- To familiarize the attendees with the quintessential ethos of Indianness comprising the musical, philosophical, aesthetic, and cultural legacy of Indian poets.
- To introduce learners to many contemporary Indian English poets.

Indian Poetry in English

Exposure?

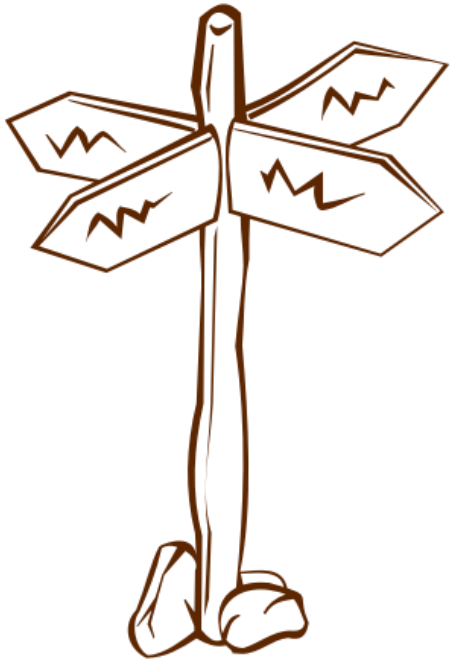
Westernization ?

Indian Poetry in English

Culture?



Sensibility?



Some Prejudiced Views

- " All attempts to court the Muse in a foreign tongue must be fruitless…True genius mistakes its vocation when it struggles in a foreign tongue." (R.C. Dutt)
- " a blind alley linked with curio shops leading nowhere." - Buddhadeb Bose(Spender and Hall, The Concise Encyclopedia of English and American Poetry)

Should Indian poets anglicize their expressions or Indianize English?



Bhasa

Valmiki

Kabir

Vedvyasa

Kalidasa



The Ramayana & The Mahabharata

Recap: Week 1

- **Introduction to Indian English Poetry**, its inception, its characteristics and its evolution.
- Journey of English language in India
- About the early Indian Poets: **Path Breakers:**
  - Toru Dutt (‘The Casuarina Tree’)
  - Rabindra Nath Tagore (Child and Innocence, *Gitanjali*)
  - Sri Aurobindo and his early works. (‘Ahana’, ‘Love and Death’ etc.)

Recap: Week 2

- Detailed lecture on Sri Aurobindo's Savitri and her arduous journey.
- Talk on Sarojini Naidu and her melodious poems some known for their aesthetic quality while others known for their social cause.
- About the **Early Modern Indian Poets**:
  - ❑ Nissim Ezekiel (Bombay poet, modern India)
  - ❑ Jayanta Mahapatra (Silence)
  - ❑ K. N Daruwalla (World of riot and curfew)

Recap: Week 3

- A discussion on the **Experimental Poets**:
  - Shiv K. Kumar (Relationships and marriages)
  - Arun Kolatkar (*Jejuri*)
  - Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (Kinship with American poets like Wallace Stevens)
- A talk on the **Confessional Poets:**
  - Kamala Das (Eternal Eve)
  - Adil Jussawalla (Feelings of marginality, alienation and foreignness)

Recap: Week 4

- A further discussion on some of the other **Confessional Poets:**
  - ❑ Gieve Patel (Green Movement writer)
  - ❑ Pritish Nandy (Filmmaker and poet)
- **Indian Diasporic poetry:**
  - ❑ A K. Ramanujan (A hyphen between Indo-American poetry)
  - ❑ Agha Shahid Ali (Pain, Death, Loss, Sense of uprootedness- Kashmir)

Recap: Week 5

- A further discussion on some of the other **Diasporic poets:**
  - Meena Alexander ("creation of feminine self and what it means to be an Indian if you live abroad"- King)
  - Vikram Seth (assimilates many traditions and cultures)
  - Sujata Bhatt (rootlessness, dislocation, nostalgia, amnesia, composite culture)
- **Post-Modern Poets:**
  - Eunice de Souza (On domestic life and sexuality)
  - Lakshmi Kannan (Celebration of the ordinary women, river myths, marginalized section)

Recap: Week 6

- Some more **Post-Modern Poets:**
  - ❑ Tara Patel (Alienations, despair, existential crisis)
  - ❑ Menka Shivdasani (Nature, alienation, women's marginalization, relationship)
- Some **Impressionistic Poets:**
  - ❑ Niranjan Mohanty

    ("Merely to be human
    Is the gist, is the theme song
    Of my life, of my poetry" (Rain)
  - ❑ Charusheel Singh (Religious Chicanery)
  - ❑ Bibhu Padhi (Lower Middle class perspective of life)

Recap: Week 7

- Another Impressionistic Poets
  - Gopi Kottoor (Objectively talks about death)

- **Haiku in Indian English Poetry:**
  - T. Vasudeva Reddy (Rural life and a world beyond this world)
  - R. K. Singh (Poet of modern sensibility who explores tradition but with a critical point to view)

- **Ethnographic Poets:**
  - R. Parthasarthy (Cultural conflict and alienation)
  - Mammang Dai (Concerns over her homeland, sense of identity)

Recap: Week 8

- Two more **Ethnographic Poets**:
  - ❑ Temsula Ao (Cultural significance of Ao-Nagas)
  - ❑ Easterine Kire (Naga literature and Jazz poetry)
- Some **Voices from the Margin:**
  - ❑ Hoshang Merchant (Queer writing)
  - ❑ Jeet Thayil (Drug and addiction)
  - ❑ Meena Kandasamy (First Indian Dalit poet)

Conclusion

- Indian English poetry is postcolonial, cosmopolitan and it tries to blend interiority and exteriority.
- The early Indian English poets struggled and the new poets widened the horizon.
- “The bind alley has become a highway and the curio shops supermarkets.”(Naik and Narayan)
- Those who predicted Indian English poetry as dying ignored the fact that resurrection is always possible.

Summing up

The sun shall shine
When I shall leave the cell,
Meadows shall not for long whine
Due to leaf's temporary fall.

Corpses are another name for births
And births for deaths,
Wisdom's self stretches out itself
From the life's lulling wealth. (*Tapascharnam*, Poem No. 89)

Works Consulted

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

- Prem P.C.K & D.C Chambial, eds. *English Poetry in India: A Secular Viewpoint*. Jaipur: Aviskar Publishers & Distributors, 2011.

- Naik. M.K. and Shyamala K Narayan, eds. *Indian Literature 1980-2000: A Critical Survey.* New Delhi: Pencraft International. 2021

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Thank You