

Voices and Visions in Indian Poetry in English after 1980's

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Indian poetry in English is an independent genre. But before being recognized, it had to pass through many developmental stages. In this process of development poetry came before fiction and drama. Indians, for centuries, have a strong, poetic tradition. English became the poetic vehicle for a number of Indians. Henry Derozio (1809-1831) was the earliest of the Indian English poets. His sonnets and lyrics with Indian imagery, mythology and themes show a remarkable command of language and beauty of expression. The influence of romantic poets on Derozio is evident in the choice of his themes like melancholy, death, patriotism, futility, love and escapism. Derozio's poetic career ended with his death at the age of twenty three. After him comes Kashi Prasad Ghose (1809-1873) who had a thorough knowledge of English prosody and

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versification. His poetry, like that of Derozio, is largely conventional.

Then came a far more gifted poet Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1827-1873). As a poet he wrote two long poems, 'The Captive Lady' and 'Visions of Past' and a few stray lyrics and sonnets. Toru Dutt is an outstanding name in the field of poetry. She first appeared in the print for the first time in December 1874. The best of Toru's work was "Ancient Ballads" and "Legends of Hindustan" Manmohan Ghose was born on January 19th, 1869 and died on January 4th 1924. "Love Songs" and "Elegies" were published during his life time. He wrote six books on the Greek myth of "Perseus" which was in blank verse. Sir Aurobindo Ghose was younger brother of Manmohan Ghose. Aurobindo's poetic output is profound and it covers the period from 1890 to 1950. His poem "Savitri" is the zenith of his achievement as a poet. Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel

Prize winner poet, is well-known. Similarly the "Nightingale of India", Sarojini Naidu wrote on a wide variety of themes including nature, man, love, death and Indian myths.

There were many philosophers who turned to poetic expression for a change. Brajendranath Seal, Surendranath Dasgupta, K.M. Panikkar, Nirodbaran, K.D. Sethna, Anilbaran Roy, Nolini Kanta Gupta and Dilip Kumar Roy are some of them. Many poets who wrote poems in English apart from these philosopher poets are R.V. Pandit, P. Seshadri, Uma Maheshwar, V. N. Bhushan, D.C. Datta, V. K. Gokak, Dhan Gopal Mukherjee, R.A. Misra, Nilima Devi, Karan Singh, R.M. Challa, Gopal Singh and others in independent India. Some names shined brilliantly in the sky of Indian English poetry. To name a few Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, K. Raghavendra Rao, A.K. Ramanujan, V.D. Trivedi and Leela Dharmraj, Nissim Ezekiel is considered as one of the greatest force in the contemporary Indian English poetry. Similarly, Kamala Das is one of the few significant poets writing in English. There are many others who have contributed to this genre, such as Keki Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahapatra, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarthy.

The period after 1980's is very fertile in the field of Indian poetry in English. A variety of voices and visions can be seen in this poetry. The present article aims to focus on thirty selected poets from the period of 1980s onwards. **Abhay Kumar** is an Indian author, poet, artist and diplomat. He wrote several poems while studying at Moscow which were later published as three books i.e. "Enigmatic Love, Fallen leaves of Autumn and Candling the Light." Global democracy and the role of internet in transforming the public sphere have been recurring themes in his writings. He believes whatever be our individual, social or other interests, we should not forget that we have only one cosmic home, Earth. He conceived the idea of India's first ever international conference on "The Internet and a Changing world" which was organized at the Jindal Global University in September 2011. "Natural spirit", "Inclinations", and "Harmonious Palette" are some of his poetry anthologies. **Agha Shahid Ali** was a Kashmiri American poet. His poetry collections include, "A Walk Through the Yellow Pages", "The Half-Inch Himalayas", "A Nostalgist's Map of America", "The Country Without a Post Office". 'Rooms are never finished.' His last book was "Call me Ishmael Tonight", English collection of gazals. He passed away on 8th December 2001 at

Amherst, Massachusetts. Through his work with poetry teaching and as the compiler of the volume "Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghazals in English", he was widely credited for helping to popularize the Ghazal form as a poetic genre in English. Ali was also a translator of the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (The Rebel's, Silhouette, Selected poems) and was the editor for the Middle East and central Asia Segment of Jeffery Paine's poetry of our world. The University of Utah awards the Agha Shahid Ali Poetry prize annually in memory of a celebrated poet and beloved teacher. James Merrill an American poet had a very significant impact on Agha Shahid Ali's poetry. Being of Kashmiri ethnicity, Ali, in regards to Jammu and Kashmir and the Kashmir conflict, stated that "ideally the best solution would be absolute autonomy within the Indian Union in the broadest sense." However he went on to state that possibly such a solution was probably no longer possible, given the actions of the Indian state in Kashmir and the fact that militant groups would never accept the "autonomy" solution. Later he was a staunch supporter of Kashmir freedom struggle. He expressed his love and concern for his people in "The Country Without A Post Office", written in the backdrop of the Kashmir conflict.

Amit Chaudhari grew up in Mumbai. He has written numerous novels, short stories, poems and critical essays in English. His collection of poems "St. Cyril Road and other Poems" appeared in 2005 and in 2001 he edited the influential, "The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature". His study of D.H. Lawrence's poetry, "D.H. Lawrence and Difference. Postcoloniality and the Poetry of the Present' was called truly groundbreaking by Terry Eagleton in the London Review of Books. Amit Chaudhari is also an acclaimed Indian classical musician and an internationally recognized singer and composer of Indo-western experimental Music, with an album from each of these genres. His project in experimental music, bringing together the raga, jazz, the blues, rock, techno, disco and the Indian popular song is called "This is not Fusion", and has been performed worldwide on March 18, 2008. He was included in the panel for the Man Booker International Prize 2009, alongside writer Jane Smiley and essayist Andrey Kurkov. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. **Dilip Sankarreddy** serves as vice President of "Save Bombay committee" and "Prakurti", nonprofits in India, He has taken up various issues concerning urban development and has given talks about environment and sustainable development in international conferences and forums.

He has written two poetry collections, "Song of a Bard and other Poems". (2005) and "Wanderings with Poetry" (2007)

Dominic Francis Moraes popularly known as Dom Moraes was a Goan writer, poet and columnist. He published nearly 30 books. His collections of poetry include, "A Beginning" (1958), his first book of poems which won the Hawthornden Prize, "Poems" (1960) "John Nobody" (1965), "Absences" (1983), "Collected Poems" (1957-1987). He also wrote biography of Indira Gandhi entitled "Heiress to Destiny" Moraes edited magazines in London, Hong Kong and New York. He was a war correspondent in Algeria, Israel and Vietnam. In 1976 he joined the United Nations, Moraes conducted one of the first interviews of the Dalai Lama after the Tibetan spiritual leader fled to India in 1959. The Dalai Lama was then 23 and Moraes was 20.

G.S. Sharat Chandra was an internationally acclaimed author of both poetry and fiction. Much of his work touches on the deep emotions of the Indian/American immigrants. His most famous work "Family of Mirrors", was a 1993 Pulitzer prize nominee for poetry. Author of ten books including translations from Sanskrit, and English into the Indian language Kannada, Chandra has given readings at the Library of Congress Oxford and Mc Daid's Pub in Dublin. His works

include "April in Nanjangud", "Once or Twice", "The Ghost of meaning", "Heirloom" and "Family of Mirrors".

Gopi Kottoor is a poet who has discovered his own voice distinct from that of his ancestors or his compeers. His poetry known for its "rich visual imagery embalmed with feeling" has won him accolades both in India and abroad. Kottoor is perhaps best known for his works, "Father, wake us in passing", a poem sequence on his father in coma and dying. His poetry has appeared in a wide range of Journals including. The Illustrated weekly, and Indian Literature (Sahitya Akademi). He recently brought out his latest book of poems "Victoria Terminus". He edits a poetry quarterly. "Poetry Chain" and presently lives in Mumbai where he works with the Reserve Bank of India.

Hemant Mohapatra is an Indian poet writing in English. He is featured in the 2011 Best New Poets series distributed by University of Virginia Press. His works has been published in various international journals such as Eclectica, Brink Lit, Asia Writes and the Paterson Literary Review as part of the Allenn Ginsberg poetry Award Series. He is also the winner of the second Srinivas Rayaprol Award and the Harper Collins Poetry Prize. He currently lives in Cambridge University, U.K.

Maimoni Raisom Goswami or **Indira Goswami** was an Assamese editor,

poet, professor, scholar and writer. She was well known for her attempts to structure social change, both through her writings and through her role as mediator between the armed militant group United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Government of India. She received the Sahitya Akademi Award (1982), Jnanpith Award (2000), India's highest literary award, for writing about the subalterns and marginalized. Two of the main features of Goswami's writing has been the focus on women and the cultural and political construct of the Assamese society. "Pain and flesh" is anthology of her poems. She died in Guwahati on 29th November 2011.

Makarand Paranjape is an Indian English poet and professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. His poetry anthologies include. "The Serene Flame", "Playing the Dark God", "Used Book", "Partial Disclosure" and "Confluence". Paranjape's topic of Ph.D was "Mysticism in Indian English Poetry."

Author of eight poetry collections and a translation of the "Bhagvad Gita" as a poem, **Mani Rao** has, had poems published in literary journals including "Fulcrum", "Wasafiri" and in anthologies including "Language for a New Century : Contemporary poetry from the Middle East, Asia and Beyond" and "The Bloodaxe Book of contemporary Indian Poets. Translations of Rao's poems have

been published in Latin, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, French and German. She has performed at literary festivals in Hong Kong, Singapore, Melbourne, Vancouver and Chicago, Her anthologies of poetry include "Ghostmasters", "Mani Rao: 100 poems", "Echolocation", "Salt", "Catapult Season", and "Wing Span" **Meena Kandasamy** is an emerging poet in English. She is also a fiction writer, translator and activist . She is based in Chennai, India. Her first poetry collection, "Touch" was published in August 2006, with a foreword by Kamala Das. Her works have been published in various journals that include "The little Magazine", "Indian literature" and the "Quarterly Literary Review" of Singapore. She was also invited to participate in the International writing programme at the University of Iowa in 2009.

Dr. Nandini Sahu is a poet of international repute. She has accomplished her doctoral study on Indian English poetry. She is currently an Associate Professor of English at the Indira Gandhi National Open University. In most of her poems, the personal, social and the spiritual dimensions of creativity are automatically fused. Her poems explore the personal and the poetic identity of the poet and her personae. Most of her poems are monologues where the personae herself is the protagonist. Other than putting

questions to the world around, she prefers to focus the torch of inquiry inward. In her poetry, aesthetics and morality do not resort to solutions for social evils and problems. She loves to make her poetics clear, through the design of perfection, if at all, that she has achieved through ages of acute pain and its manifestation through her poetic lines. She is a humanist to the core, and a rebel sometimes. Her poetry collections include, "The Other Voice" (2004), "The Silence" (2005) and "Silver Poems on My Lips" (2009). **Purushottam Lal** or **P. Lal** was an Indian poet in English essayist, translator, professor and publisher. He was the founder and publisher of Writer's Workshop in Calcutta established in 1958. Under the name of P. Lal he wrote eight books of poetry, over a dozen volumes of literary criticism, a memoir, several books of stories for children, as well as dozens of translations from other languages, chiefly Sanskrit into English. He is perhaps best known as the translator into English of the entire Indian epic poem Mahabharata. Writer's Workshop has published first books by many authors who went on the fame, including Vikram Seth, Pritish Nandy and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

Prithwindra Mukherjee is the grandson of the Bengali revolutionary Jatindranath Mukherjee (Bagha Jatin). He was mentioned by the Sahitya Akademi

manuals and anthologies as a poet before he attained the age of 20. As a specialist in the French language and literature he translated works by French authors such as Albert Camus, Saint John Perse and Rene Char directly from their originals. **M. A.R. Rafey Habib** is an Indian born Muslim poet and scholar of literature who has also written numerous books of literary criticism. Habib grew up in England gained his Ph. D from the University of Oxford, has worked extensively in the United States and is currently a professor of English at Kingston University, London, Habib's books include "Shades of Islam : Forms for a New Century", Modern literary criticism and theory." As a Muslim poet who felt bothered by militant extremism, Habib has used his poetry to condemn terrorism. **Raman Mundair** is a British poet, writer and playwright. Her first collection of poetry 'Lovers, Liars, Conjurers and Thieves' was published in 2003 and was widely praised. Her poems combine honesty with precisely turned and unobtrusive language whose rhythms always have a sense of rightness. Her poetry anthologies include "A Choreographer's Cartography", "One poem in Search of a Translator", "Addicted to Brightness" etc.

Ranjit Hoskote is a contemporary Indian poet, art critic, cultural theorist and independent curator. He belongs to the

younger generation of Indian poets who began to publish their work during the early 1990s. His work has been published in numerous Indian and international journals. His writings have revealed a consistent and exceptional brilliance in its treatment of image. His main theme is life as intricate, complicated revolutionary movements in time. Although he was closely associated with the modernist poet Nissim Ezekiel, who was his mentor, Hoskote does not share Ezekiel's poetics. Instead, his authentic choices align him more closely with Dom Moraes and Adil Jussawalla. Hoskote's poetry anthologies include "Zones of Assault", "The Cartographer's Apprentice", "The Sleepwalker's Archival" and 'Vanishing Acts: New and selected Poems' 1985-2005. **Robin Ngangom** is an Indian poet and translator from Manipur. He is a bilingual poet who writes in English and Manipuri. He studied literature at St. Edmund's college and the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, where he teaches now. His books of poetry include "Words and the Silence" (1988) published by Writer's Workshop, "Times crossroads" (1994) and "The Desire of Roots" (2006). **Shiv K. Kumar** is a poet, playwright, novelist and short story writer. From 1959 to 1986 he taught English literature at Osmania University and the University of Hyderabad. He received the Sahitya

Akademi Award in 1987 for his collection of poems "Trapfalls in the Sky". In 2001 he was awarded the Padma Bhushan for his contribution to literature. His collections of poetry are, "Articulate Silences, Cobwebs in the Sun, Subterfuges, Woodpeckers, Trapfalls in the Sky, Woolgathering, Thus spake the Buddha and Losing My way". The volume "Trapfalls in the Sky" has also been translated into Urdu and Hindi. He has also done the poetry translation, "Faiz Ahmed Faiz : Selected poems" (Urdu to English) and the Best of Faiz. **Smita Agarwal** is a poet and professor of English at the University of Allahabad. Her doctoral studies were on American poet, novelist and story writer, Sylvia Plath. Agarwal is an editor and translator for Plath Profiles, the Sylvia Plath online journal, Indiana University, US. In 1996 she was a writer in residence at the University of Stirling in Scotland and the University of Kent in England. Her poems have been included in: "Literature Alive, New writing from India and Britain "Vol.2 Summer 1996, "Nine Indian women poets", Verse: Special Feature on Indian poetry, U.K. and U.S.A." "Reasons for Belonging" etc. Her works include Wish-granting words Mofussil Notebook : Poems of Small Town India".

Som Prakash Ranchan has often been described as "Poet of many voices"

with the note of mythical/mystical themes noticeable in his writings. His psycho-analytical studies have the influence of Carl Jung, Adler and Freud, the mythological studies of Joseph Campbell, the spiritual, the spiritual endeavors of Aurobindo, Otto Rank, Rudolfe, Vedanta and Tantra and the Philosophical notions that of Schopenhauer. Ranchan's diaspora was full of joy, cheers and learning experience for him. It was in California that his interest in comparative literature developed Ranchan as a writer. He became an Indo-American mediator. Ranchan's Christ and I, Mother Sharda and I, Manjushri: Tibetan Buddha etc. **Subash Misra** is a poet, development worker and UNICEF staff. His book "Gangasmriti and other poems" was published by Writers Workshop, Kolkata. In his collection of poems, he goes ecstatic in praise of "Srishti : The Creation". He has worked for UNICEF and has headed the Tsunami Recovery Programme in Andaman and Nicobar. **Tabish Khair** is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, University of Aarhus in Denmark. His books include "Babu Fictions, The Bus Stopped", and "The Things About Thags", His honours and prizes include the All India Poetry Prize and a honorary fellowship for creative writing from the Baptist University of Hong Kong.

range in poetry displays a remarkable mind with both profound curiosity and a nature with the deepest desire to explore the spiritual. The range of his poetry and its multiple voices is likewise quite rare. His poetry displays mastery of both Indian esoteric traditions of Vedanta and Tantra and Western depth psychology and religious figures. More than anything, Ranchan perceives and reveals the myth that operates in all of our lives. His poetic work includes "The Splintered Mirror, Loose Ends, In the labyrinth of the self, Long Dialogue Poems,

Tishani Doshi is an Indian poet, journalist and dancer based in Chennai. Her first poetry collection, "Countries of the Body" won the 2006 Forward Poetry Award for the best first collection. She has been invited to the poetry galas of the Guardian sponsored Hay Festival of 2006. **Sudeep Sen** is a poet and editor living in London. His books include "Postcards from Bangladesh, Prayer Flag. Distracted Geographies & Rain". Born to Malayalam writer and rationalist Pavanan and Parvathy, **C. P. Surendran** received his M.A. in English Literature from Delhi University. He was resident editor of the Times of India in Pune for three years. He is now senior editor with the Times of India in Delhi. A selection of his poems was included in Gemini in 1994. He published an independent collection of

poems 'Posthumous Poems "in 2000. His other poetry collections include "Canaries on the Moon" and "Portraits of the Space We Occupy". **Shreekumar Varma** is the great grandson of the artist Raja Ravi Varma. He is a poet and a novelist. He has contributed poetry, fiction and non-fiction to several anthologies, including Poetry Society of India His publications include "Where the Rain is Born: writings from Kerala". "The Puffin Book of Poetry for Children" and other poems.

T.K. Doraiswamy also known by his pen name Nakulan was a poet who wrote both in Tamil and English. During his literary career which started in his forties he wrote a novel and six books of poems in English and nine novels and five books of poems in Tamil. He was one of the first writers to attempt techniques like stream of consciousness in Tamil literature ably. His English poetry collections include "Words to the Listening Air", and "Non-Being". He also wrote a long poem in English called "Raja Vembala". He has translated James Joyce, T.S. Eliot and K. Ayyappa Paniker to name just a few. His best translation work may be the book. "The Little Sparrow" in which he devotes himself entirely to the great Subramanya Bharati's writings. Although the influence of James Joyce was pronounced in his writings, it was more the metaphysical and religious thrust similar to T.S. Eliot's and

the sparseness of style of Samuel Beckett that really made his works outstanding. He was definitely a late Modernist moving into the realm of post-Modernism. He never compromised in his writing or his life on what was expected of an artist. The last poet to quote is **Yuyutsu Sharma**. A widely traveled Nepali/Indian writer. He has published eight poetry collections including "Milarepa's Bones, Helambu: 33 New poems, Space Cake, Annapurna Poems" and other poems. He has translated and edited several anthologies of contemporary Nepali poetry in English and along with Shailendra Sakar launched a literary movement "Kathyakayakalp" (Content Metamorphosis)

These poets have contributed a lot to the field of Indian poetry in English, after 1980. And some of them are still striving hard for the enrichment of Indian poetry in English .

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