CHAPTER–I

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
NEW INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Indian English poetry has gone a long way in the acquisition of a flourishing prospect covering a span of more than one hundred fifty years. It was termed British-Indian poetry or Anglo-Indian poetry earlier. Since we are not concerned with that phase of Indian English poetry which dated back to the colonial times when English used to be the language of few aristocratic Indians, we shall simply examine here that phase of Indian English poetry which has a direct bearing on the history of modern India.

Emergence of Indian poetry in English starts truly with Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1808-31). He has two volumes of verse to his credit Poem (1872) and The Fakeer of Jungeera: A Memorial Tale and Other Poems (1828). His shorter pieces like To India My Native Land, The Harp of India and To The Pupils of Hindu College have an unmistakable authenticity of patriots’ utterance which stamps Derozio as an Indian English poet who is truly a son of soil.

Toru Dutta is significant poet of early Indian English poetry whose major work is A Sheaf Gleaned in French Field published in 1876. Most of the poems are superbly lyrical expressing the sentiments and joys of human life. Prof. V. K. Gokak has classified the Indian English poets into two categories ‘neo-symbolists’ and ‘neo-modernists’ who lay emphasis on mysticism and humanism respectively.
Sri Aurobindo, a man of versatile genius and achievements, gave a new dimension to Indian English poetry. His major works are – *The Life Divine, The Secret of the Vedas, The Ideal of Human Unity, The Future Poetry, The Synthesis of Yoga* etc. Sarojini Naidu, one of the greatest and finest poets, distinguished herself both as a poet and a patriot. Mahatma Gandhi gave her the title ‘Nightingale of India’. Her poems are available in four volumes *The Golden Thershold* (1905), *The Bard of Time* (1912), *The Broken Wing* (1917) and *The Feather of Dawn* (1961) which was published posthumously. These poems taken together show a carefully maturing poetic personality. It shows the steady growth of her poetic sensibility and imagination which at first found delight in observing ‘magical wood’ or a wandering ‘fire fly’ towards a serene but delightful mood of mysticism as in *To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus* and *The Soul Prayer*. According to K. R. Ramchandran:

By winning recognition in England she brought prestige to Indian English writing long before Tagore received Nobel Prize; and her best poetry is not just a faded echo of the feeble voice of decadent romanticism, but an authentic Indian English lyric utterance exquisitely turned to the composite Indian ethos, bringing home to the unbiased reader all the opulence, pageantry and the charm of traditional Indian life, and the splendors of the Indian scene.¹

Michael Madhusudan Dutt was gifted poetic artist. His fame rests securely on his great Bengali epic *Meghanad Badha* centering round the heroic figure of Indrajit, Ravan’s son. In his famous work *The
Captive Lady, a long metrical romance, he describes the love story of Prithviraj and Sanjukta.

Tagore was the first Indian writer who gained for modern India a permanent place on the world literary map. He wrote mainly in Bengali but translated many of his Bengali poems and plays into English, so his renderings are called trans-creations. The phenomenal success of Gitanjali (1913) encouraged original writing in English poems. The Crescent Moon, The Gardner, Fruit Gathering, Lover is Gift, Crossing the Fugitive and other poems etc. are rich in poetic element.

The poets of pre-Independence era have dealt with a variety of themes and styles. While Derozio has credit to use a derivative and romantic style, Romesh Chander Dutt is known for narrative style. Aurobindo and Micheal Madhusudan Dutt used the epical one; Toru, the simple and transparent one; Tagore, the prose poem style and Manmohan Ghose followed the style of the decadent of nineties. While Sri Aurobindo has characteristic traces of obscure and mantric style, Sarojini’s sophisticated and figurative one. The pre-Independence poetry has basically a mystical social orientation.

The new Indian English poetry began with the attainment of Independence in 1947. The new poets discarded the influence of the Romantic and Victorian poetry and preferred Walt Whitman, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Allen Tate and Wallace Steven. This era is proud to be productive one. A casual glance at any good anthology of Indian English poetry unfolds
a score of names that have become well established in the sphere. The excellent examples of such anthologies are R. Parthasarthy’s *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*, Keki N. Daruwala’s *Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-80* and A. N. Dwivedi’s *Indian Poetry in English*. The prominent names are: Dilip Chitre, Keki Daruwala, Kamla Das, Gauri Deshpande, Eunice De Souza, Adil Jussawala, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahaparta, Arvind Mehrotra, Gieve Patel and of course the most remarkable ones – Nissim Ezekiel and A. K. Ramanujan. Calcutta Writers Workshop (founded in 1958) has published the works of such modernist poets as Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, Kamla Das, V. D. Trivedi, Mary Erulkar, A. K. Ramanujan, Keshav Malik, Prithish Nandy, Shankar Mokashi Punekar and others. These poets have interpenetrated and conglomerated Indians and English sounds and tried to acclimatize the English language to our cultural overtones that give different lexical context to the same words. This may bring them fresh laurels to vindicate the real variety of Indian English poetry.

The new poets who began to appear at Independence were in love with the English language, excited by late-nineteenth and twentieth century poets as Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Pound and Auden……. Their emphasis was more on the aesthetic, ethical or interpersonal than on politics, nationalism and mythology. The new poetry was part of the post-independence modernisation of Indian society and emerged first in, and is still a phenomenon of, the larger urban areas.²
The number of poets and anthologies are considerably increased. This proves that poets can swim in foreign ocean as Dr. R. L. Varshneya comments:

The credit of making Indo-Anglian literature in general and poetry in particular acceptable and honourable also lies with Indo-Anglian critics and anthologists, most of whom are outstanding teachers of English such as Dr. K. R. S. Iynegar, Prof. V. K. Gokak, Prof. Narsimhasah, Dr. M. K. Naik, Prof. Sisi Kumar Ghose, Mrs. Prema Nand Kumar, Dr. Ramesh Mohan, Prof. P. Lal, Shiv K. Kumar and a host of others.³

New Indian English poetry is also demonstrated through its syntax, word-order, thought and passion. It is an active involvement in and the graphic evocation of social happenings. Indian poets reveal their passions, emotions and experiences which are truly Indian.

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the foremost Indian poets of post-Independence era who has attracted considerable attention from scholars both in India and abroad. His first two volumes appeared within five years of Independence, A Time to Change (1952) and Sixty Poems (1953) followed by The Third (1960), The Unfinished Man (1960 and The Exact Name (1965). All his six collections of poems and poems published separately are related to one another and form one organic whole. An early poem throws light on latter one; for him poetry is a consistent flow like life itself. He says defining the poem:

³
A poem is an episode, completed
In an hour or two, but poetry
Is something more, it is the why
The how, the what, the flow
From which a poem comes,
In which the savage and the singular,
The gentle, familiar,
Are all dissolved; the residue
Is what you read, as a poem, the rest
Flows and is poetry.  

Poetry for him has always remained a limpid style of life despite his varied interests and pre-occupations. The collection also brings out his psychological interest and his unusual gift of sketching the portraits of individual human beings. From sketching the portraits of others he again and again returns to his own self as is seen in the following extract from the poem “On Meeting a Pedant”.

Words, looks, gestures, everything betrays
The unquiet mind, the emptiness within.
Sunlight swarms around him and the summer
Evenings melt in rich fatness on his tongue
But he is rigid …
Give me touch of men and give me smell of
Fornication, pregnancy and spices,
But spare me words as cold as print, insidious
Words, dressed in evening clothes for drawing rooms.

The collection *The Third* reveals a deepening of Ezekiel’s love and sympathy for the lower creatures of nature. “Insect Love”, “Cure”, “Sparrows” and “Aside” are the finest lyrics of this category.

Ezekiel seeks to transmute the mundane in himself and in his surroundings in such a way as to lead acquiescence. He manages to
comprehend ineptitude with humour, and to speak of what is real when it is also unlovely and inglorious. Ezekiel’s poems in Indian English show him venturing successfully into modes no longer preoccupied with the self, in which he can sympathise better with unsympathetic aspects of his linguistic and cultural milieu.

Kamla Das is one of the members of the poetic trinity of new Indian English poets, the other two being Nissim Ezekiel and Ramanujan. Her poetry is characterised by extreme sincerity and integrity. She speaks out of her love-longings, frustrations and disillusions with a disarming frankness. She writes, it seems for therapeutics purpose. Her volumes of poems are *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descend Ants* (1967), *The Old Play House and Other Poems* (1973), and *Collected Poems* (1975).

Kamla Das is primarily a confessional poet, and much of her own life and suffering have gone into her poetry, as her autobiography, *My Story* shows. She sings mainly of love, and the different roles it plays in human life.⁶


Pritish Nandy who has made a certain reputation and established himself near Kamla Das. His poems, “Near Deshapiya Park”, “They Found Him at Last” and “Calcutta If You Must Exile Me” are worth mentioning. In the same way “Jejuri” (1976) by Arun Kolatkar is a poem of stark realism and varied experiences of life.
There are other eminent voices who have contributed to the stream of Indian English poetry through originality of expression and context. These poets belonging to their specific region and ideology are prolific writers.

Dilip Chitre’s *Traveling in A Cage* (1980) contains poems which are characterized by black moods, stormy energy, nostalgia and search for roots.


R. Parthasarthy, a celebrated editor of *Poetry From Leeds* and *Ten Twentieth Century Poet,* is remembered as poet for his two volumes of verse entitled *Rough Passage (1976)* which is divided into three parts – Exile, Trail and Home Coming. It has autographical interest.

P. Lal, the pioneer of modern Indian English poetry and the founder of Writer’s Workshop, Calcutta, has helped the Indian English creative writing to have a place of its own in the body of Indian literature. His poems are contained in *The Parrot’s Death, Love’s First Change, They Said, Draupadi* and *Jayadartha Yakshi from Didarganj, The Man of Dharma, The Rasa of Silence, Calcutta* and *Collected Poems.* P. Lal is characterized by sharp intellectual quality, clarity of expression, chasteness of diction, spontaneity, suggestiveness, emotional intensity, softness and refinement of diction and evocativeness of images.

Jayant Mahapatra, a prolific poet, is a late bloomer in the field of poetry. His poetic volumes are – *Close the Sky Ten by Ten (1971), A Rain of Rites (1976), A Father’s Hours (1976), The False Start (1980)* and *Relationship (1980).* Mahapatra is an original poet. His poetry is charged with the continuous effort and fertility of his metaphors.

There are some more illustrious poets standing on the threshold of twenty first century like - Gauri Deshpande, M. N. Sharma, I. H. Rizvi, H. G. Rassol, Charmayne D’Spiza, Imtiaz Dharkar, C. L. Khatri, Chitra Prasad, Rohini Gupta, Agha Shahid Ali, Sujata Bhatt, Leela Dharamraj, R. C. Shukla, D. C. Chambial, Suresh Nath, S. C. Dwivedi and others. Their poetry is also varied and seizes the human sufferings, relations and experiences in a subtle way.

**Themes and Techniques of New Poetry**

The pre-Independence poetry is reminiscent of English Romantic and Victorian poets – Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson and Swinburne. The great pioneers like Derozio and M. M. Dutt imitated the manner and method of Byron and Scott mainly dealing with Indian or oriental themes. They imitated forms and rhythms of English poetry. They picked their themes from Indian history, myths and legends and tried to forge something distinctive. But new Indian English poetry both by virtue of its quality and its bulk, has established itself as a major expression of Indian sensibility. Great number of Indian poets are writing in English today and their themes and techniques are quite different from those of earlier poets. Nissim Ezekiel, Kamla Das and A. K. Ramanujan are the stalwarts of new Indian English poetry. The poetry of new poets voices the joys and sorrows of the Indian people. Through them contemporary Indian reality is also universalized and generalized.
Indianness is the basic quality of modern poetry. It is inborn Indianness or the feeling of being Indian in the real sense that has galvanized the contemporary Indian English poets. All the aspects of India have been shown by new Indian English poets such as provincialism, superstitions, complexities, dominance of male world etc. The great rivers and mountains of India, the treasure of Indian myth and legend, the memories of racial or local history have shaped modern poetry.

New Indian English poetry has dealt with a number of indigenous themes – nature, man, love and the heritage of man consisting of myth, legend, history and fine arts. Metaphysical longing, devotion, mystical contemplation and spiritual illumination are some of the other themes. New Indian English poets have dealt with both the physical and spiritual aspects of life and have reconciled the two opposites and thus are trying to write poems in the tradition of Indian culture which is composite and cosmopolitan.

Nissim Ezekiel is a very Indian poet writing in English. He is entirely Indian in his sensibility. He has not made efforts to describe Indian culture but he has made good use of ‘Babu Angrezi’ or Indian English.

Nissim Ezekiel exploits this national trait in the poem “Good bye Party for Miss Pushpa”. As an illustration, can consider the following from Very Indian Poem in Indian English.

I am standing for peace and non-violence.
Why world is fighting, fighting
Why all people of world
Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,
I am simply not understanding.
In the same way he has described a flood in Bihar. The apathy of the government – ministers and officials in handling the situation is typically Indian.

For a visitor
to the flood affected areas
of Balasore, Myaurabagh, and Cuttack
In North Bihar,
it is a job to get at the truth.
Meet any official,
he will claim his district
sub-division or block
is the “Worst hit”
and pass on a hand-out
with statistics of relief work.⁸

“Night of Scorpion” published in the *The Exact Name (1965)* is one of the finest poems of Nissim Ezekiel and has been universally admired for its admirable depiction of a common Indian situation.

My father, septic, rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.
He even poured a little paraffin
upon bitten toe and put a match to it…
My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion pricked on me
and spared my children.⁹

Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Mores, Kamla Das, A. K. Ramanujan, P. Lal and Mukashi Punekar have all contributed to the new traits in new Indian English poetry and made it Indian first and last. Their responses to tradition are diverse ranging from love-hate to dispossession and from revaluation to reaffirmation. But in essence
they reflect the new spirit of creative openness and expressive positivism. They easily merge with vernacular scene and are in fact, indistinguishable from their counterparts in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil or Telgu. Nissim Ezekiel’s “Morning Prayer”, Kamla Das’s “The Dance of Eunuchs” and A. K. Ramanujan’s “The Striders” illustrate the chief Indian trends in new Indian English poetry. M. K. Naik asserts:

The Modern Indian poet in English is truly Indian when he draws his artistic sustenance from his heritage. He may not totally accept it; he may even reject aspects of it which he thinks are undesirable; but he can not altogether ignore it.  

In the works of Kamla Das there is passivity as well as rebellion against a male-dominated world. The puzzling adolescence gives the pain of growing up. This is very common in Indian society. The girls are restricted and kept up in the boundary of the house. In “An Introduction”, she expressed her grief:

…Dress in sarees, be girl,  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,  
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,  
Belong, cried the categorizers. Do not sit  
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.  
Be Amy, or be Kamla. Or, better  
Still, be Modhvikutty, it is time to  
Choose a name, a role …

She has voiced the vacuum of Indian wife or woman who in her attempt to be stamped malafide and idealized crushes down the very instincts of nature. Love, sex, and man-woman relationship are dealt with frankness and clarity. Most of Kamla’s poems deal with the theme of unfulfilled lover and yearning for love. “The Dance of the
Eunuchs” is a good example of a poem dealing with the theme. In the poem she finds an objective correlative in the dance of the eunuch to represent the theme of suppressed desire within. Her love poetry is unconventional and shocking to the orthodox minds because her treatment of sexual love and the human body is free, frank and uninhibited. She, unconventional in life and equally unconventional in poetry, has refused to confirm to the traditional role which a woman and a wife is expected to play. In “An Introduction”, she says:

I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him… the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me… the ocean’s tireless
Waiting.\(^\text{12}\)

Indian life is made up of compromises seeking perpetuity of married life. The poem “The Testing of The Rivers” conveys an altogether different mood. It shows the strong sense of belonging to one and bonding with another :

I am happy just being with you. But you…
You love another
I know, he said perhaps a handsome man,
A young and handsome man. Not young,
Not handsome. I thought, just fitting snob.\(^\text{13}\)

Sex continues to be a predominant theme in the work of Indian English poets. Ezekiel does not deal with love and sex as personal reflection but as practised and viewed in the society. He depicts women as things and grows ecstatic about them as about other beauties of nature.
That women, trees, tables, waves and birds
Buildings, stones, steamroller,
Cats and clocks.
Are here to be enjoyed.
The true business of living is seeing, touching, kissing,
The epic of walking in the street of loving on the bed.\textsuperscript{14}

The emphasis of the contemporary poets is on self-search and introspection. Consequently the emphasis is on originality and experiment in word-craft, intensity and strength of feelings, clarity in thoughts and lucidity of styles. The treatment is characterised by simplicity and clarity and all complexity, intricacy have been painstakingly avoided. There is much experimentation in effort to achieve modernity. Modern techniques, derived from such English craftsmen as Eliot, Auden and Dylan Thomas as well as from film industry and the advertising industry, are being used. This experimental creativity driven by quest for originality and newness; this stress on individuality and the rejection of all the traditional often leads to fantastic results. There is much ‘image-hunting’ and ‘word-hunting’ in new Indian English poetry.

The new Indian English poets wrote for themselves in aesthetic modes not only with their individual sensibilities but also with enough potential to offer significant frames for emerging talent as Parathasarthy has rightly noted that each of them by his own practice set the pace and pointed the opportunities open to other poets and poems like “Night of the Scorpion” and “A River” by their vision of an every day Indian reality expressed in an obtrusive personal voice
stood out in the reader’s mind as sign post indicating the directions, English poetry was likely to take in the future.

The pre-Independence poets were projecting landscapes, moods, fancies and dreams but the new experimental poets are more concerned with their own nostalgia, crisis and quest for identity. Under the impact of urbanisation, industrialisation, westernisation and science poetry has become matter of fact and concrete intellectualised. There have been new influences from the west: Existentialism, Positivism, Phenomenology, Surealism and New Aesthetics. The new poets have suddenly passed from the barren lands of conservatism to the fertile pastures of cosmopolitan. Preference to the lyric is another prominent feature of new Indian English poetry besides experimentation with prosody. The poetry of this period ranges from personal emotion and lyricism to complex linguistic experimentations, dry intellectual tone, pungent satire and nursery rhyme. The third quarter of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century has seen the further strengthening of modernist as well as neo-symbolist trends. Poets like B. B. Paymaster and Adik Sett continue to write in the well established new Indian English tradition.

New Indian English poetry has also evolved its own style. There is colloquial and conversational style in poets like Saklatvala who have spent a great deal of their time in the West. No doubt they have skillfully handled the heroic-couplet, the octosyllabic couplet, the blank verse and the various stanza forms including the Spensarian stanza and ottava; contemporary writers like Nissim Ezekiel, Kamla Das, A. K. Ramanujan, Gauri Deshpande, Pritish Nandy and few
others move easily in modern idiom and rhythm. The poetry written in English by Indians is richer and subtler than that produced in previous age. Experiments are going on in new form and techniques.

**Poetic Techniques**

To the new poets poetry is not just formalised, ornamented rhetorical self expression; it results from a fusion of thought and feeling into precise images which give expression to the contemporary mind as experienced and reflected upon by the poet. Precise images which are used to communicate knowledge. A great poem embarks on a sort of journey or voyage through symbols and allusions to encompass the human conditions. Poetry expresses new kinds of consciousness. In the poem “The Egotist’s Prayer”, Nissim Ezekiel’s need for God has often been expressed ironically. In the poem his ironic and skeptical attitude is conveyed. He says:

> O well, if you insist,  
> I’ll do your will.  
> Please try to make it coincide with mine.  
> The price of wisdom  
> is too high,  
> but folly is expensive too.  
> Strike a bargain with me, Lord.  
> I am not a man of ample means.15

The ironic, satiric and self-consciously personal they are not just new notes but are parts of different kinds of Indian English poetry. In the poem “In India”, Ezekiel says in ironical way:
The men are quite at home
among the foreign styles
(what fun the flirting is!),
I myself, decorously,
press a thigh or two in sly innocence.
The party is a great success.
Then someone says: we can’t
enjoy it, somehow, don’t you think?
The atmosphere corrupt,
and look at our wooden wives…
I take him out to get some air.16

Gieve Patel’s own interest in the peasantry is ironically contrasted to
that of his grand father, a landowner who asks:

But for what, tell me, do you look in them,
They’ve quite exhausted my wonder –
Difficult, ungrateful,
Double-faced, unreadable;
I have dealt with the peasantry
Over three quarter of a century
And I fail to follow your thinking.17

Kamla Das’s exquisite lyric is ironic in tone for the poet is not at all
in love but disgusted with the man who has used her body. A sense of
revulsion takes possession of the poet. She compares the mouth of her
lover to the sun which brings in turn, both the heat and loss of love.
The title of the poem “In love” is ironic:

O what does the burning mouth
Of sun, burning in today’s
Sky, remind me… oh, yes, his
Mouth, and … his limbs like pale and
Carnivorous plants reaching
Out for me, and the sad lie
Of my unending lust.18

A. K. Ramanujan’s irony is all pervasive most of the poems about his family are tinged with irony. “Still Life” captures this irony at its most static.

When she left me
after lunch, I read
for a while.
But I suddenly wanted
to look again
and I saw the half-eaten
sandwich,
bread,
lettuce and salami,
all carrying the shape
of her bite.19

The irony becomes pungent and sardonic in “Warning” :

Poverty is not easy to bear.
The body is not easy to wear.
So beware I say to my children
Unborn, lest they choose to be born.20

New Indian English poets have applied the symbols in very artistic way. The illustrations are apt and distinguished. Jayant Mahapatra uses symbols from his environment to articulate an inner space of feelings. The titles of the poems are indicative of how the external world especially, the Indian landscape and seasons becomes the starting place of the imagination in such poems “Dawn”, “Village”, “Old Palaces”, “A Rain of Rites”, “A Rain”, “Listening”, “Summer”,

19
“Main Temple Street”, “Puri”, “A Twilight Poem”, “Appearance”, “Silence”, “Dawn at Puri”, “Indian Summer Poem” and “Evening”. These are the nuances of feelings which arise during isolation, loneliness and silence. Contradictions, oppositions, contrasts and unexpected relations have been presented through symbols. Crows in his poetry are symbolic of evil, guilt and destruction; water symbolises clarity and wisdom and rain is a symbol of purification. “Taste of Tomorrow” for example is a vignette of Puri with a number of such symbols of reality. The dawn symbolises the start of activity rather than the silence in which associations are found and discovered. In contrast to the activities of morning however, there is the quietness, passivity of waiting and of accepting. He says:

Out of dark it whirls back
into a darkly mysterious house…
Is the dawn only a way through such strange terrain?
The frenzy of noise, which a silence recalls
through companions lost, things suddenly found?
There is a dawn which travels alone.²¹

In the poems of Nissim Ezekiel symbols play very significant role. Thus in “Enterprise” the journey is also symbolic of the voyage into one’s inner self, the voyage of self exploration. Home symbolises the place where one lives as also of one’s inner self. In “Night of the Scorpion”, flesh of diabolic tail in dark room is the symbol of the evil that pervades the world against which all created things have to wage an ever-continuing struggle and which can be overcome only by an integrated approach. In the poem “Night of Scorpion”, the symbolic reference is:
Ten hours
of steady rain had driven him
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.
Parting with his poison flash
of diabolic tail in the dark room –
he risked the rain again.²²

The new Indian English poetry is also rich in imagery. It is functional. Kamla Das images are symbolic and thus they increase the expressive range of her language. The sun and heat, house and window, cremation and burning, objects of nature, human anatomy, sleep, sea, the mythic grandmother and Krishna constitute her whole range of imagery. Images drawn from human body are used most frequently. The male body is an agent of corruption, a destroyer of female chastity and individuality. Thus in “The Freak”, the male anatomy furnishes her with images of horror and ugliness. It is represented as repulsive and destructive. The mouth is a dark cavern, the cheek is sun-stained and the teeth are gleaming and uneven. It is an instrument of destruction. Her rejection of the male body is total and is symbolic of her revolt against male-ego and the male-dominated world. She is conscious of the beauty and glory of the human anatomy and is attracted by it but its raging lustfulness disgusts her and hence use of images are apt. In the poem “The Looking Glass”, she is conscious of disease and decay of human body.

Notice the perfection
Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
Shower, the shy walk across the bath room floor,
Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
Urinates. All the fond details that make
Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The worm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hunger.

The images concretize her fond awareness of the intimate human details. They express adequately her abiding love for the human body as also her aversion to it. Another recurrent image is that of sun and heat it generates. It is used most frequently as a symbol of lust and corruption rather than vigour and regeneration. In “The Dance of the Eunuchs”, “The Summer in Calcutta” and in a host of other poems, the sun with its scorching heat is an agent of pain, suffering and lustfulness. Like the male body it is destructive and corrupting in its influence. The four elements – air, fire, earth and water are also in symbolic forms. The sea image recurs most frequently and acquires symbolic significance. The sea for her is a place of retreat both from the ravages of the boastful male and scorching sun. In “The Invitation”, the poet ultimately decides to merge with the sea. The sea symbolizes a place of retreat from barren lustful relationship as well as the cosmic home. In “My Grand-mother’s House”, the window image underlines here the languishing desire of the poet for a sentient peep into her past and resurrect her dreams and desires.

Nissim Ezekiel is not an imagist poet in any sense but this does not mean that imagery is entirely absent from his poetry. Certain images are frequently repeated and they enable the poet to make the abstract concrete and easy to understand. The woman, the city and nature are the recurring images in Ezekiel poetry. They are key images but
usually a number of associative images are woven around them. In “Description”, the poet concentrates on a single image of hair in its multiple associations:

I will begin—but how should I begin?
With hair, your hair,
remembered hair,
touched, smelt, lying silent there
upon your head, beneath your arms
and then between your thighs a wonder
of hair, secret
in light and in darkness
bare, suffering with joy
kisses light as air.24

In the poem “Urban”, there is a total image of city and city-men who are lost, disillusioned and bewildered. The city like a passion burns and in the “Morning Walk”, the city is presented in all its horrors and ugliness.

Barbaric city sick with slums,
Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,
Its hawkers, baggers, iron-lunged,
Processions led by frantic drums,
A million purgatorial lanes,
And child-like masses, many-tongued
Whose wages are in words and crumbs.25

A. K. Ramanujan’s poetry is image-oriented. In his poetry, his images are primarily visual. Words tend to collocate together into an image which then triggers off the poem. The entire poem is infact, a complex of more than one images as in the following poem “No Man is an Island”.

23
The entire island:
an alligator
sleeping in mask of stone.
A grin of land
even on good days; on bad,
the ocean foams in that mouth.\textsuperscript{26}

The zigzag movement of snakes as seen by him as a child is fully brought out with the help of concrete images; the fear of the child is contrasted with the worshipful reverence of the mother who gives them milk and watches them empty the saucer as well as with the snake-man in making a garland of them round the neck. The mental picture of snakes gains intensity when images are piled one on another in the poem “The Snakes”.

The twirls of their hisses
rise like the tiny dust-cones on show-noon roads
winding through the farmer’s feet,
Black lorgnettes are etched on their hoods,
ridiculous, alien, like some terrible aunt,
a crest among tiles and scales
that moult with darkening half
of every moon.\textsuperscript{27}

The concrete visual imagery is central to Ramanujan’s technique of communication. It conveys his essentially Indian sensibility. It is drawn from the common Indian scenes and sights so vividly present before mind’s eye of the poet. The poem “A River” for example, depicts a common, everyday phenomenon of Indian life – the suffering caused to the people by the every recurring floods and droughts.
every summer
a river dries to a trickle
in the sand,
baring the sand-ribs,
straw and women’s hair
clogging the watergates
at the rusty bars
under the bridges with patches
of repair all over them,
the wet stones glistening like sleepy
crocodiles, the dry ones
shaven water – buffaloes longing in the sun.²⁸

The important aspect of Jayant Mahapatra’s poetry is his use of imagery starting in its freshness and originality. The landscape of Orissa, more particularly its sea-coast with its colourful sunsets and sunrises is imaged in all its glory and wonder. Mahapatra, a child of the sun and sea, delights in invoking the god of fire and the god of water in poems like “Sunburst”, “The Exile”, “Indian Summer Poem”, “This Stranger”, “My Daughter” and “The Beggar Takes it as Solace”. Puri is a living character in several of these poems. The temple, the priest, the beggar, the fisherman, the crow etc. rise in all their objective reality and correctness and then slowly transform themselves imperceptibly into monument like images. In the poem, “Taste for Tomorrow”:

At Puri, the crows
The one wide street
lolls out like a giant tongue.
Five faceless lepers move aside
as a priest passes by.
And at the street’s end
the crowd thronging the temple door;
a huge holy flower
swaying in the wind of greater reasons.²⁹

An examination of recurring images in Mahapatra’s poems reveals that he is Orriya to the core. The sun of the eastern coast of India shines through his poems. The eastern sea sends its morning wind through them. In such poems, by a careful selection of details, the local becomes symbolic of India as a whole. The physical landscape represents the deeper levels of Indian consciousness and psyche which have been shaped by religious and cultural forces.

In a poem entitled “A Missing Person”, the image of the woman calls up in the reader’s mind a response which includes besides a sense of loneliness, a haunting perception of an indescribable feeling of loss within self.

In the darkened room
a woman
cannot find her reflection in the mirror
Waiting as usual
at the edge of sleep
In her hands she holds
the oil lamp
whose drunken yellow flames
know where her lonely body hides.³⁰

Most of his poems have a closed form. The structure of the verse is tight and there is close logical connection between the opening image and the one which closes the poem. This closed structure is well illustrated by the poem “Bazar, 3 p.m., in Orissa”:
The sunlight hurls spears,
The past is on top of us,
a deadweight of words,
scarred common faces
at the center of rapt prayers…
The afternoon ambling behind
the foot falls of home bound cattle
suddenly stiffens with an unhurried fear,
the bazaar an orange ruin of limb echoes.31

These images bring out the effect of obstructions like the past, the suffering, the exhaustion and the fear. The closing line is a tidy summing up of all that has been presented earlier in the poem.

New Indian English poets are rich in vocabulary and poetic techniques. India and Indianness are their main themes. They are widely read literary persons. They are mostly from universities and colleges. Their experience of world and teaching is felt in their poems.

**The Poets in Thesis**

**S. C. Dwivedi**, the first poet of this study, is also a translator and critic honoured with Rahul Sankrityanan and George Abraham Grierson Award and an Honorary D.Litt for his distinguished achievements in literature. Scholarly command on various literatures and languages has imparted his poetic criticism a brilliance of thought and expression. Rich in Vedic allusions and images his poems are replete with universal truth and appeal.
D. C. Chambial, a prolific writer of English, Hindi and Pahari, is a living legend. An author of six collections of poems, Chambial is a poet and short story writer as well as a great academic, literary critic and initiator of mapping Himachal Pradesh on the literary scene. Widely acclaimed and awarded internationally for his creative genius, D. C. Chambial has a passion of poetics. His poetry is permeated with love for common man. It presents a spectrum of longings, struggles, suffocations - all mixed together with victorious strides, solidarity and sycophancy-lamentations and yearings.

Suresh Nath is the third poet of the study. His poetry is full of simple joys and sorrows, hopes and tribulations. In spite of being well versed in the imagery of established poets he has remarkable originality of thought and expression. Written in autobiographical strain, his poetry unfolds a highly sensitive soul that yearns for a touch of true love and concern. The deep pangs of agony find universal connotation through vibrant notes of his poetry.

R. C. Shukla, a bilingual poet, appeared on the horizon of Indian English poetry with his first collection of poems entitled A Belated Appearance published in 2000 and established himself as a poet of remarkable creative potentials. He has endeavoured to distinguish himself with his communicative skills, his rich and new imagery and experimental forms of delineation. His poems are scrupulous expression of what he himself has seen around him.
References


15. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, p. 103.


20. *Ibid*.


23. *New Indian English Poets and Poetry*, p. 120.


25. *Ibid*.


30. *Ibid*.

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