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NEW TRENDS IN MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY BY SELECTED WOMEN POETS

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ABSTRACT

Indian English Poetry has been a rich contribution to the world of literature. There has been a rich legacy of poets writing their poems in English Language. Historically Indian writers in English both during pre-Independence and post Independence have been extremely rich in their unique ways of presenting human emotions. Women poets of pre-independence and post independence period have been enriching English poetry by their presentation of new trends and themes. The present paper deals with the new trends introduced by the selected women poets namely Sujata Bhatt, Meena Kandasamy and Smita Agarwal. The poems of these women poets are beautiful pieces of their literary talent and craftsmanship. There are various trends found in their poems which have given new meaning and directions to the heritage of English poetry written by women poets of the post-independence period.

**Key Words-** Indian English Poetry, New trends, Women poets, Pre-Independence period.

Indian literature in English refers to literature associated with Indians inside and outside India and produced by writers in India and outside India, unlike other world literature. Though there has been substantive part of literature written in English but there are bodies of written works in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, and other regional languages which have been translated into English. Translation from English into Indian languages has been a literary trend in India. Translation writers or poets have played a significant part in the development of Indian English-language literature. The creative output of the writers in English are enabling in the emergence of the modern trends in their works and poetry is not exception to this case.

With the passage of time, Indian English poetry has rapidly moved from spirituality to specificity, to its main preoccupation and concern as well. This becomes the trend for the poetry. On observing at pre independence poetry, we meet the stalwart figures of Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, and the like who despite their deep patriotic concerns wrote poems evincing their focus on the matters of soul, God or ultimate truth. These poets were very close to the spirit and tradition of Vivekananda and Ram Tirtha who were in the thick of the India awakening in the renaissance period through forging an identity and unity not only within them but also between East and West cultures.

The poetry of Sarojini Naidu and Tagore drew heavily from the Indian scenes was suffused with romanticism to the extent of making it abstract to a large sense. As a result of the decolonization Indian poetry wore a different and fresh face with the coming of Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das to name a few on the scene like Bharati Muharjee, Sujata Bhatt etc. These poets ushered in a total radicalization on the issues of language and content. Giving up old traditional rhyme, rhetoric, gush of romantic similes, high sounding and sweeping imagery, the shift could be felt in the concretization of thoughts and feelings expressed in a concrete style. Specificity of location and theme on the basis of one's cultural and historical reality has made the poetry of present day generation more readable and relevant. The present paper attempts to analyze the creative new trends in the modern Indian poems.

Indian English Poetry can be divided into three phases, the first phase deals with Imitative poetry: This was at the time of the colonial period and the Indian poets like Dezorio, also known as the father of Indian English Poetry, Toru Dutt, etc. imitated the romantic poets like Wordsworth, Keats, Shelly, Blake, etc. the second phase belongs to Assimilative poetry. Now this phase of poetry was essentially romantic but, fraught with various emotions like nationalism, mysticism and the like. In this phase, Aurobindo, Tagore, Sarojini Naidu pioneered. The last phase deals with the Contemporary or the modern poetry: this phase of Indian English Poetry started when the colonial rule ended. So, the theme was mainly of identity crisis. The Indian poets were trying to establish their individualistic contribution to the English Poetry. Now, this phase encompasses a lot of theme and variations. Like, some poets used it as an autobiographical medium; others used it to highlight the ill practices of society. The modern poets are experimenting with new themes every now and then. And modern poetry isn't rigid and not based on just one theme or pattern. Using multiple themes in a single poem is one of the trends of modern Indian English poetry by women poets. Modern Indian poetry in English can be defined as poetry written or published from 1947 onwards (the year India gained Independence from British rule), by poets of Indian origin, writing in the English language. This includes poetry from the Indian Diaspora, written by poets of Indian origin, born or settled outside of India. (<https://www.quora.com>).

Modern Indian poetry have features like, free verse - non-rhyming poems with irregular verses, themes are more intellectual than emotive, Stream of consciousness - a literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue, more use of satire and cynicism, it questions the order of society, less stress on idealism and perfection, much more experiments with language and imagery, beliefs are questioned and comparatively cold and dispassionate tone is used, poetry is written as an art for art's sake without considering many differences between moral and immoral. Poems are written about topics that are concrete as education, war, rape, a woman's smile, etc rather than those which are abstract like truth, virtue, moral, beauty, etc.

Another trend is no use of imitation; everything is looked at from different angles, different perspectives, poems about more than love and beauty, much more grounded images and descriptions. Love is more a red rose, it is more like the ecstatic feeling that is seldom experienced, outspoken and unafraid, modern poetry has an influence of globalization and poems tend to borrow from other cultures and languages, fragmentation, unconventional use of metaphors in modern poetry are emerging trends of the modern time.

The country has given some brilliant trendsetters – male and female who project the postcolonial dichotomy at various levels. Their writings have been giving a glimpse into the modern Indian society. They want to use poetry as a powerful medium to bring about the social change. They have an array of themes to offer us through their writings and to project the most topical but also the most controversial. A deep study of modern Indian poetry leads to an interesting study of Indianness find in Indians.

Sujata Bhatt (1956- ) has translated Gujarati poetry into English for the *Penguin Anthology of Contemporary Indian Women's Poetry* and poems by Gunter Grass and Gunter Kunert. Her translation from the German, *Mickle Makes Muckle: Poems, Mini plays & Short Prose* by Michael Augustin which was published in 2007. She has published six collection of poems including *Monkey Shadows* (1991), *Augatora* (2000), and *A Colour for Solitude* (2002) which deals exclusively with the life and work of the German painter, Paula Modersohn-Becker. Her latest collection *Pure Lizard* was published in 2008 and was shortlisted for the Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year), 2008.

Her first collection, *Brunizem* published in 1988 in which half the poems are set in India, recalling her family as well as the sights, sounds and smells of village life: "cow-dung and road-dust and wet canna lilies, / the smell of monkey breath and freshly washed clothes" ("Muliebrity" 7-8) though returning to her home city of Ahmedabad after ten years away brings mixed feelings. They draw upon Indian myths, deities, and especially animals: snakes or monkeys and goats, peacocks, lions, lizards, snakes, and elephants also play their roles.

In her collection of poems *Delhi Zoo* (2008) Bhatt comes to symbolize philosophical conundrums of soul and body. There are number of stirringly erotic poems in which Bhatt's metaphors give erotic play to language, though her preoccupation with it is also political. She reconciles English and Gujarati in one of her most memorable poems, "Search for My Tongue". Its opening question, "what would you do / if you had two tongues in your mouth" (3-4) arises from listening to a tape recording sent by her mother from India, reaching her in Maryland, USA. Its sinuous lengthy progress makes extensive use of Gujarati words translated within the poem, ending simply with the musical rhythms of the table and the phrase "I can't forget." These are some trends used in the poetry of Bhatt.

It is more like a skin,  
a reptile's skin -  
wrinkled and rough as a crocodile's and green  
Bacterial green, decomposed green -  
opaque and dull.(3-6)

Children imagine that crocodiles devour careless men who sleep too close to the lake and, "There are hardly any trees/near the lake; no friendly monkeys/who would throw fruits down/to the crocodiles, as they do. . ." (46-49)

Sujata in her poem, "White Asparagus" throws light on the female desire which is as important as the male's. In this poem, she enters into the consciousness of pregnant women who erotically relieve her state of sexual fulfillment. She asks: "who understands the logic behind the desire?" (22-23) she shows the argument that in a society where both the male and female have equal contribution as well as participation, why is the female desire not recognized whereas the male-desire is looked upon with proper respect?

Smita Agarwal's (1958-) is another woman poet whose works have paved the path for a triumphant argument for recognizing Indian poetry written in English as diverse, vibrant, and evolving. Many of the essays question previous critiques of Indian poets and assumptions about writing in English, while offering a newer and better understanding of the divergent poetics during different periods instead of lumping all poets under the postcolonial umbrella. Agarwal's volume examines poetry written in English in relation to regional languages.

Smita Agarwal reveals the lyrical intensity of her poetry. For her poetry is an emotional outlet of her emotions. Eunice de Souza talks about her poetry, "Smita Agarwal is frequently concerned with pain, but in the tradition of impersonality, it is expressed through the dramatized consciousness of other people, or other forms of life". (Eunice D Souza 60)

Due to the presence of the just mentioned feverish strife in the psyche of poet, Smita Agarwal involved in an imagery which indicates the emotional outburst of her heart. In the poem "The Map", the picture of volcano is an extended image of poet's own disturbed heart. These lines present her disturbed heart:

Geophysicists peer into its smoking vent,  
Wondering how, for over a thousand years,  
It has been fuming yet never allowed  
It's seething discontent to spew out ("The Map").

Another trend of her poetry is her imagism of love in her work. The remarkable poem "Parrots" is an example of explicit love imagery. The third stanza reaches the height of forbidden subject. Traditional readers accept these type of content. India has a tradition of the erotic as exemplified by Jayadeva, Khajuraho, Kalidas, and the list is so long. There is no forbidden subject in art. Art breaks boundaries, permits new things and trends to be born and the old and accepted to grow. The erotic content may be uncomfortable to read or see but it is

relevant all the time. As in the poem "Mediatrix" she presumes: "A man is in love with his own shadow/A shadow that must follow and fir his nation of love,. . .Nor a mind, but simply with an idea of himself "

Meena Kandaswami (1984-) is also one of the women poets who has been instrumental in giving new trends in poetry. Her poems bring into focus caste annihilation, feminism and linguistic identity. One of her first poetry collections, *Touch* was published in August 2006, with a foreword by Kamala Das. It was translated into five different languages upon publication. Her second poetry *Ms Militancy* was published the following year. Other works such as *Mascara* and *My Lover Speaks of Rape* won her the first prize in all India Poetry. Her books *Touch* and *Ms Militancy* were reviewed by the *New Indian Express*. *Touch* was criticized for its English language errors, though its challenging themes were described as "interesting". *Ms. Militancy* was described as an improvement in her use of the English language but "disastrous, if not worse" in terms of themes and content. A review in *The Hindu* put the negative criticism into context, describing Meena's work as difficult for anyone whose politics were "mainstream". Her poetry is "about the female self and body in ways not 'allowed' by this discourse". Poems of Meena Kandasamy are definitely standing very strong against the subjugation of women. They motivate the women to come out of their shell and carve a place for themselves in the society.

Understanding the information of an expression is one-step and understanding the meaning is another. The meaning turns out as knowledge when one brings the meaning into habit or practice. In "Dead Woman Walking" by Meena Kandasamy explored the meaning of 'Dead Woman' as follows:

I am a dead woman walking asylum corridors,  
with faltering step, with felted, flying hair,  
with hollowed cheeks that offset bulging eyes,  
with welts on my wrists, with creasing skin (1-4)

In the last stanza she says:

I sang in praise of dancing dervishes, i made music  
for this world to devour on some dejected day.  
i shed my beauty, i sacrificed my six senses.  
some called me mad, some called me mother  
but all of them led me here,  
to this land of the living-dead.(21-26)

In nutshell, these three Indian poets Sujata Bhatt, Meena Kandaswami and Smita Agarwal have great contribution in the progress of Indian English poetry and these poets have been rich in their unique ways of presenting human feelings and emotions. Their poems along with romantic elements also consist emotions of nationalism, mysticism and other divergent trends. The women poets also use autobiographical medium and their experience in there poetry. There are use of multiple themes in a single poem. Although there are recurrent themes of despair in their poetry, the note of optimism cannot be ignored. They harp on their vision and make all attempts to integrate tradition with modern outlook and endeavor the poet play a leading role for her original imagination and thought. The feelings of diaspora and nostalgia are also the major trends of their poetry. Use of language and diction in a peculiar manner with neologism and having use of technical and modern slangs is new and different major trend of these women poets. Love, beauty images of love are also the subthemes of their poems and they mostly do not imitate others' works and stamp a mark of their own style. They depict their original thoughts, experience and techniques and that becomes the trend of the time making them the trend setters in the realm of post-independent women poets of India.

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