

## Depiction of Modern Thematic Perceptions in Indian English Poetry After Independence

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**Abstract:** Poetry is the vital-spark of heart- the heart that constitutes a feeling of love for beauty, provokes an excitement for life and awakens an urge to struggle against the odds of life. Indian culture is constructed with the rich fabric of poetry. Indian poetry after independence is loaded with its richness in subject, themes, style, thought, images, colours, shades, setting and beautiful rhythms of modern period. This article highlights the dynamic approaches of modern poets' specially after independence towards modern thematic perceptions which is the key of their poetry such as alienation, loneliness, dissatisfaction, disbelief in married life, search of identity, disillusionment, Indianness, Indian culture, boredom, anxieties, bewilderment and allusion of modern life and many more from different dimensions altogether in their renowned works specially in poetry. The themes, thoughts, ideas and their subject matter is quite enough to represent their mental pain, social dissatisfaction and happiness in modern perspective.

**Keywords:** alienation, loneliness, dissatisfaction, pain, grief, disagreements, disbelief in married life, search of identity, disillusionment, Indianness, Indian culture, boredom, anxieties, bewilderment and allusion of modern life.

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### Introduction

Indian English poetry was something different in terms of theme and style both. Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arun Kolatkar, A. K. Mehrotra, P. Lal, Keki N. Daruwala, Prithish Nandy, R. Parthasarathy, Shiv K. Kumar and A. K. Ramanujan sing the song of human emotions and existence in effective manner after independence. They continue the sublime tradition of their predecessors in the post-independence period. They fulfil the demand of modern generation by presenting disgust, bewilderment, disillusionment, suffering, frustration, hopes and aspirations. These poets cover a wide range of themes — the question of identity, human relationship, alienation and loneliness, and conflict between tradition and modernity. The versatile genuineness of these modern poets have proved their success because while discussing the common people emotions they were very practical. K. K. Singh rightly remarked their work in these kind words in his famous book 'Indian English Poetry After Independence':-

"After independence, Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, P. Lal, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, A.K. Ramanujan, Pritish Nandy, Gieve Patel, R. Parthasarathy, etc., have made unique attempt to make their voice universal with authenticity and spirit. Their contribution provides them identity and makes them authentic enough to challenge the age-old English Poetry with experiments and innovations."

Poets after independence set themselves in totally new human condition. They sing the song of human complications and passion more strongly and authentically. Their approach towards human problems is very different from their predecessors. R. C. Gupta has rightly remarked in these words—

"After independence, Indian poets found an opportunity to dive deep into human emotions and passions. Patriotic themes, religious orthodoxy, cultural heritage have become themes of the past. Distorted feelings, hurt emotions, unfulfilled passions, search of identity, struggle against inhuman force are some of the themes which provide ample opportunity to the poets to exhibit their talent."

After independence, the poets love to choose themes related to common human problems. Dissatisfaction, social injustice, alienation, loneliness, frustration, search of identity, miserable condition of poor, workers, inhuman attitude towards women and so on are very important themes handled by the poets. Almost all the Indian English poets after independence are deeply concerned with the theme of suffering, bewilderment, boredom, and frustration of the people in general. Since after independence the dream and desire of the people of every class became extremely high. On the other hand, the rapid development in the field of science and technology motivates the people to think something extra. The poets realize the fact that in spite of all these developments, the condition of human beings has not changed. The

different stages of humanity decreased too much and man has become totally unconscious about the fellow men.

Kamala Das is the most interesting personality in modern Indian English poetry. She has a unique personality and her open and frank expression has made her unique and versatile amongst all her contemporaries. She raised the voice of the women in her poems. Her feminine sensibility is sharpened by her confessional and autobiographical nature of poems. K. R. S. Iyengar writes in this direction rightly:

“There is no doubt Kamala Das is a new phenomenon in Indo-Anglian poetry a far cry indeed from Toru Dutt or even Sarojini Naidu. Kamala Das’s is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in an insensitive largely man-made world.”

In her poem titled “A Widow’s Lament” she describes feeling isolated in a male-dominated society that she could never call her own, because it had no place for its women –

“This has always been someone else’s world not mine my man, my sons farming the axis while I, wife and mother, climbed the glass panes of their eyes.”

She was totally unsatisfied with the society and system because all relations either mother or wife were hidden in male personality and she hated that system which was not ready to change its rule or accept womanhood. While women were giving everywhere her immense contribution to build a family, society, and nation. Kamala Das is always sincere and true to herself both in her prose and her poetry. As a wife she was expected to look to the comforts of her husband, to fulfil his needs, in short, to play the conventional role of a Hindu wife and this has dominated and stunted her own personality. Das was very depressed by the behaviour of her family and society. Her each and every words were not telling about herself only but expressing the whole womanhood of her age. Her clear and open style had made her a great female writer and she must be called role model of the women in each time.

Purushottam Lal has also expressed the modern predicament, disillusionment, bewilderment, lost faith in human values, cultural degradation, suppression of human emotions and sentiments, intellectual and moral lapses of human beings in his poetry very clearly. K. K. Singh has rightly remarked P. Lal in his book ‘Indian English Poetry After Independence’ in these kind words –

“Indian English literature is fortunate enough to produce a versatile genius like Purushottam Lal whose contribution is remarkable not only in the development of modern Indian English Poetry, but also lies in providing proper name and magnitude to modern Indian English verse. Purushottam Lal’s contribution to modern Indian English Poetry lies in his methodological appreciation, critical and logical attitude and above all, his creative genius. He was a man of feelings and his strong sense of nationalism made him a writer-patriot in his time.”

Nissim Ezekiel deals with a variety of themes in his poems. His most of the poems discuss the predicament of modern people and conflict also. He sings the songs of conflict in his poems, but his poems are not intensely personal although his own remarks are in this direction –

“Scores of my poems are obviously written for personal therapeutic purpose.”

In his poem ‘Enterprise’, he is bewildered by the imposed conflict and problems because his aims and ambitions are not realised into actuality. He creates the difference that what he was thinking and what was happening and although he was much conscious about human emotions and nature he writes pathetically–

“But when the differences arose, on how to cross a desert patch we lost a friend whose stylish prose was quite the best of our entire batch. A shadow falls on us-and grows.” (Enterprise)

A. K. Ramanujan is also one of them who shows the devastating nature of the flood in his famous poem ‘The River’ that how the flood grasped three houses and several people but the devastating nature of the river is not sung by the poets. Here Ramanujan narrates the pathetic story of flood which also demolishes hopes and aspirations of the common people. Poet says that how flood has swallowed two cows, Gopi and Brinda and a pregnant woman. Here we can see the dissatisfaction of the poet very clearly:

“The poet sang only the flood. He was there for a day, when they had the floods people everywhere talked of the inches rising, of the precise number of Coded steps run over by the water rising, on the bathing place, and the way it carried of three village houses one pregnant women and couple of cows named Gopi and Brinda, as usual.”

Through this poem of A. K. Ramanujan has throws light on the problems of the common people especially deprived group of society because they are not economically empowered so they have to suffer much at any cost. K. K. Singh rightly viewed him in his famous book ‘Indian English Poetry After Independence’:

“In spite of his limited range, A.K. Ramanujan excels better among his contemporaries. His selection of theme and application of refined poetic style make him a unique poet in the History of modern Indian English Poetry.”

The alienation of A. K. Ramanujan is the result of his growing sense of cultural awareness. M. N. Prasad rightly remarked-

“The theme of alienation always colours Indian English Poetry. The alienation is not caused by ‘failure’, but is the result of deep and intense feeling towards human suffering and predicament.”

Jayant Mahapatra’s poems are well versed in Indians with great variety and depth. Like his contemporary Nissim Ezekiel, A.K Ramanujan, Shiv K. Kumar, A.S. Kolatkar, A.K. Mehrotra, Kamala Das, Keki N Daruwala, Pritish Nandy, poems of Jayant Mahapatra are the real epitome of Indian life with all its authenticity. His poems are extremely rich in the presentation of various colours and shades of Indian life. According to the critics his love for Orissan life as well as natural surroundings inspire him to dive deep into local life and his poems are the result of his love and fascination for local culture and local life. His large number of poems are well versed in the depiction of local flora and fauna of Odisha. The rich cultural heritage of Orissa temples at Puri provides suitable and appropriate thematic perceptions for the poet. His poetry reveals the fact that whatever happens in Orissa, happens everywhere. There seems to be unique plight in his poems

which symbolises his transportation from personal to universal. The poet is extremely conscious about his own identity in this vast universe. His unique Indian sensibility colours everywhere in poetic composition. He loves to present authentic picture of ancient as well as contemporary Orissa society with more objectivity and ironical detachment. His approach towards life is completely coloured by his Indian sensibility. D.K Awasthy rightly remarks about this feature of his poetry in these suitable words:

“In his poems, Mahapatra dives deep into emotions and passions of Orissan people with required dimension and desired objectivity. There is a unique sense of poetic truth and poetic beauty in decoding Indian sensibility. The natural life of Orissan people, temples at Puri, age old myths, rituals and festivals, traditions and conventions, hunger, starvation, poverty, dance, music magic and religious life – all these features are well visible in his poems. The poet authentically represents local life enthusiastically. His poems are the real epitome of Orissan life. The strong sense of spirituality and intellectuality is visible everywhere in his poetic creation. Imageries and symbols are well drawn from Indian life and Indian natural landscape.”

Thus, Indian sensibility seems to be the source of inspiration for the poet all the time. His poems like – ‘Pain’, ‘Dawn at Puri’, ‘Grandfather’, ‘The Indian way’, ‘The Quality of Ruins: ‘The Faith’, ‘Samsara’, ‘Landscape’, ‘Hunger’, ‘River’, ‘A Country’, ‘Myth’, ‘Sanskrit’, ‘The Absence of Knowledge’, ‘Relationship’, ‘Shadows’, ‘The Hour from the Window’, ‘Of That Rice fields’, ‘The Lie of Dawns’, ‘Four Poems’, and ‘Silence’ are full of Indian sensibility because the poet seems to portray different shades and colours of Indian life. In all these poems the poet presents Indianness with completeness. He seems to be the close observer of human emotions and patience and above all he does not hesitate to present human predicament with ironical detachment. For instance, in his poem summer the poet presents the predicament of an Indian girl combing the hair of her mother. The poet compassionately presents the head of that 10 years old girl. He writes:

“A ten years old girl combs her mother’s hair, were crows of rivalries are quietly nesting. The home will never be hers. In a corner of her mind a living green mango drops softly to earth.” (Summer)

The poet is quite aware about Indian life with all indulgence. The poet is conscious about great Indian spiritual and intellectual heritage. The poet is not only interested in physical beauty of the temples hills rivers the poet is quite aware about the essence of spirituality in Indian cultural heritage.

Keki N. Daruwala an Indian English poet, recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award, a landscape poet of eminence and well known for his vivid imagery and exploration of complex themes such as boredom, conflict, dilemma, dissatisfaction and disbelief in relationships. His famous poem ‘Fire-Hymn’, the poem revolves around Parsi funeral site, where the dead are placed in Tower of Silence according to Zoroastrian tradition. Because it is their faith that after death their body will be used to fill the stomach of some vultures. In this very poem Daruwala rightly explored the themes of cultural conflict and frustration of the modern man.

“bore witness to the fire’s debauchery. My father said, “You see those half-burnt fingers And bone-stubs? The fire at times forgets its dead!” A Zoroastrian I my child-fingers clenched

into a little knot of pain, I swore to save fire from the sin of forgetfulness.” (Fire-Hymn’)

In these lines we can see the clash between Parsi and Hindu funeral rites highlights the tension between tradition and personal choices. The poet is caught between religious duty and human emotion in terms of modern dilemma and conflict. It is the frustration of the modern man that they try to involve in nature’s work otherwise fire knows its duty that what and how she has to perform her duty.

Not only these poets but also many poets such as Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahapatra, Keki N. Daruwala, Gieve Patel, Pritish Nandy and so on have chosen themes of human existence, human predicament, modern man, devastated nature, man and women sufferings and many more.

Shiv K. Kumar has beautifully examined the modern man’s suffering and alienation in these words in his famous poem “Writing on Sand”:

“.....Only on sand, while I hear the waves intoning mantras in my ears. Let my epitaph be written on sand. Let nothing remain after I am gone.” (Writing on Sand”, p.27)

The dissatisfaction and distorted nature of the modern man are clearly visible in the title and lines of the poem ‘Writing on Sand’. Kumar was highly dissatisfied with the fake identity and fake relation of the modern people. So, he wished to write his epitaph on sand because he knows reality that only nature can help us in any situation. Not only in this poem but also in his many poems deal with such themes in detail like alienation, loneliness, disbelief, disability, disgust, disillusionment and many more. Dr. K. K. Singh rightly observed him in his renowned book ‘Indian English poetry After Independence’:-

“Shiv K. Kumar perhaps the well-known artistically perfect poet of his time. He does not follow the set rules and decorum of Poetry as suggested by the critics. He deals with the boredom, anxieties, bewilderment and allusion of modern life”. (K. K. Singh, p.168)

The detailed study of Kumar’s poems show that his poems throw light on modern man’s existence and modern man’s complexities for that he has dive deep in the authentic and realistic domain of the modern man’s suffering and pain. Dr. K. K. Singh rightly remarked his poetry in these words:-

“Shiv K. Kumar is neither romantic nor classical nor lyrical in his themes and style both. The poet handles the modern themes of agony and anxiety in his short and long poems both. Like Nissim Ezekiel and A. K. Ramanujam his poetry is also the result of the ‘Conflict between Two Selves.” (K. K. Singh, p.168)

Kumar is a poet who is known for his depiction of India and Indian culture and its different thematic aspects in a very beautiful way. He is essentially concerned with the Indianness of his experience in order to recreate new themes, techniques and idioms, distinct from writers all over the world who write in English. His poems on Indian subject depict the natural scene and environment, Indian life and Indian myth and philosophy. His treatment of Indian themes is so genuine and obvious that it remains unaffected from the Western attitude of the poet. His poetry epitomizes the multidimensional experience of being Indian- the inheritance of a glorious culture and civilization, the

sufferings of the present and glimpses of aspiration and hopes for the future.

It is the beauty of Indian writing in English that almost each and every writer including poets, novelists, dramatist etc. are engrossed with Indian sensibility in their creative compositions. Their creativity is well coloured with Indian colour and shades in each and every respect. Indian philosophic and spiritual reflections, Indian intellectual flavour, Indian religions and festivals, Indian ethos and ethics, Indian moral sensibilities, Indian conventions and traditions, Indian temples, Gurudwara and mosques, Indian mountains, hills, caves and gardens, Indian flowers and fields and above all Indian way of life thinking and feeling same to colour Indian writers in English with all its charm, fascination and imagination. Right from the beginning to the present age almost all the writers- Derozio, Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Harindra Nath Chattopadhyay, etc. before independence and Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujam, A.S. Kolatkar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Shiv K. Kumar, Keki N Daruwala, Prithish Nandy, Kamala Das, Gieves Patel, P. Lal etc. after independence in the field of Indian English poetry same to carry the tradition of delineating Indian cultural life and different thematic perceptions with all its features in their poetry.

Therefore, we can say that the poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arun Kolatkar, A. K. Mehrotra, P. Lal, Keki N. Daruwala, Prithish Nandy, R. Parthasarathy, Shiv K. Kumar and A. K. Ramanujan after independence were very interested to show modern people sufferings and suffocation in their own family, society and country due to the different reasons. These poets raised the cry of the depressed one before nation very honestly and genuinely.

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