

An Analysis of Indian Poetry in English

*For Graduate and Post-Graduate
[English] Students*

Based on NEW SYLLABUS

Dr. Kalyan Pandey

MA (Eng), MA (Linguistics)
MA (Political Science), MA (Education),
MA (Old Eng), MEd, PGDTE(CIEFL)
M Phil (Linguistics), Ph D (Literature)

Dr. Emily Pandey

MA (Gold Medallist), M.Phil., Phd.
Head of the Department of English
NIIS College of Information Science and
Business Administration
Bhubaneswar, Odisha



GRANTHA TIRTHA

Publishers & Book Sellers
65/3A, College Street, Kolkata 700 073

*P*REFACE

This book entitled 'An Analysis of Indian Poetry in English' intended for the students of English Honours and M.A. and also designed for SSC and other competitive examinations. It is a detailed and analytical study of some selected poems written by Indian poets writing in the English language. The selection of the poems has been made on the basis of the syllabuses prescribed by the universities of West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and other universities of India.

Poetry generally proves tough for students to read, understand and enjoy. The volume has been written in a such that those for whom it is intended will find it an interesting study. Each poem has been properly summarized and its theme has been analysed with a critical bent of mind. A comprehensive discussion on each of the poem has been presented in the volume in the form of "Introduction" which precedes the discussion and analysis of the poem. Words and difficult expressions have been adequately noted and annotated. Besides, important lines and stanzas have been elaborately elucidated and explained.

The volume contains texts of the poems and their elaborate analysis. The discussion has been admirably enriched with adequate references and illustrations. Rhetorical problems have been clearly explained. The volume aims at providing interest as well as knowledge to the students so that they read poetry, understand it and enjoy the pleasure of reading poetry.

What is special about this volume is that I have incorporated in it the characteristic features of poetry from the romantic to the modern ages. The discussion on this point will. I am sure, provide the students with a definite glimpse into the study of poetry. It will also enable them to understand the poets, the poetic views, the characteristics of the ages, the social and literary theme presented in their poems and above all, their philosophical approaches to life and society in the background of changing social, political and literary situation in India.

I am heavily indebted to many scholars and teachers whose ideas, views and opinions about the poems have been freely used in the volume. Sri Debajyoti Bhattacharjee Kolkata, who has designed page setting and provided the decorative idea of the printing of the book is always gratefully remembered. Above all, I am immensely indebted to Sri Sandip Nayak, who kindly deigned to publish this book. My humble effort will be deemed highly prized if it serves the purposes of the students.

Malda

Dr. Kalyan Pandey

CONTENTS

AN ANALYSIS OF INDO-ANGLIAN POETRY	13 - 18
HENRY LOUIS VIVIAN DEROZIO	19 - 45
● The Harp of India	20
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Orphan Girl	27
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● To India — My Native Land	34
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Freedom To The Slave	40
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
TORU DUTT	46 - 62
● The Lotus	49
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Our Casuarina	53
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
KAMALA DAS	63 - 128
● An Introduction	70
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Invitation	78
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Delhi 1984	88
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	

● Summer in Calcutta	93
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Old Playhouse	96
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Forest Fire	103
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Looking Glass	109
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● My Grandmother's House	115
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Freaks	120
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
A.K. RAMANUJAN	129 - 167
● The Last of the Princes	133
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The River	140
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Striders	148
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Of Mothers, among other things	155
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Still Another view of Grace	160
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
NISSIM EZEKIEL'S POETRY	68 - 222
● Enterprise	171
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	

● Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.	178
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Philosophy	183
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Night of the Scorpion	192
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Visitor	201
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● A very Indian Poem in Indian English	208
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher	216
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
JAYANTA MAHAPATRA	223 - 257
● Lost	227
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Indian Summer	232
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● A Missing Person	235
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● The Abandoned British Cemetery at Balasore, India	238
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Dawn at Puri	245
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Hunger	251
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
R. PARTHASARATHI	258 - 269
● River Once	258
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	

● Under Another Sky	263
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
KEKI. N. DARUWALLA	270 - 293
● The Ghaghra in Spate	273
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Ruminations	281
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
● Fire Hymn	288
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
ARUN KOLATKAR	294 - 301
● The Bus	296
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
MAHADEVI VERMA	302 - 311
● The Temple	303
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	
SACHCHIDANANDA HIRANAND	
VATSYAYAN (AGYEYA)	312 - 320
● Hiroshima	313
Introduction — Text — Notes and Annotations — Critical Appreciation — Questions with Answers — Explanations	

AN ANALYSIS OF INDO-ANGLIAN POETRY

INDO-ANGLIAN, LITERATURE

Indo-Anglian is the term used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indians. Indians have so far produced literature in this language, and this has been globally acclaimed. The English language continues to be used by educated Indians as a medium of their creative exploration and expression of the experience of life. Their writing has now developed into substantial literature in its own right, and it is this substantial body of literature widely known and recognised as *Indo-Anglian literature*. It is essentially Indian literature.

Anglo-Anglican literature is distinguished from *Anglo-Indian literature* which is used to denote literature produced by English men in the English language, and its theme is based on India, Indian society and Indian life. Rudyard Kipling is an Anglo-Indian writer because he wrote about India and Indian life. The works of Indo-Indian writers significantly serve to interpret India to the West. But it is to be borne in mind that their presentation of Indian life is often more romantic than realistic. They tend to depict India as a land of snake-charmers, jugglers and Maharajas, and one great value of "*Indo-Anglian Literature*" is that it serves to correct their picture and project a more favourable and truthful image in India.

We have another type of literature in English which is termed "*Indo-English literature*", which is used to denote translations into English from literature in Indian languages. This *Indo-English literature* has been further classified into *Classical Indo-English literature* and *Modern Indo-English literature* on the basis whether the translation is of an ancient or of a modern work.

Indo-English literature consists of translation from the "*mother tongue*" into English which is rarely the first language of an Indian. In making such translations the translators are required to see to it that his language is not only grammatically accurate but also has idiomatic accuracy of a high degree. Indo-English literature has its own significance both in India and abroad.

We have another category of translations in the English language, to which the term *transcreation* rather than translation is applied. *Transcreation* and not *translation* proper is a measure of faithful adherence to the original. Tagore's *Gitanjali* is the only outstanding work of transcreation on the part of an Indian writer in English. There are "*transcreations*" or something in-between translation and creation, for Tagore took liberties with his originals. They are "*transcriptions*" or something in-between translation and creation, for Tagore took liberties with the originals and re-wrote them in English rather than attempting a literal translation. He made occasional changes in the original. Sometimes two or three original poems were combined into one.

Indo-Anglian writing has achieved a separated genre and this is distinguished from Anglo-Indian writing and Indo-English writing. This way of writing has been enriched by such internationally recognised figures as Toru Dutta, Sarojini Naidu, R.N. Tagore, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi and others. A number of eminent Indians such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao wrote in English and Indo-Anglian literature grew and flourished and has now reached and peak of excellence.

The body of Indian literature in English is variously designated as *Indo-Anglian literature*, *Indo-English literature*, *Indian Writing in English* and finally *Indian English literature*. Prof. V.K. Gokak maintains that Indo-English literature denotes translation into English from Literature in Indian languages. Indo-English literature has been regarded as part of English literature, as part of commonwealth or third world literature, as part of Indian literature and as representative Indian literature the crystallises and synthesizes responses and traditions of Indian literature written in different regional languages. At present literature produced in India and written in English or other Indian languages and dealing with Indian life culture and society is popularly designated as Indian English literature.

P. Lal has rationally distinguished between Indo-Anglican literature and Indo-English literature. In his opinion, the distinction between Indo-English literature and Indian Writing in English (or Indo-English literature) needs to be marked. Indo-Anglian literature suggests literature produced by Englishmen on Indian subjects or by heavily – Anglicized Indians who look at Indian life with alienated eyes. Indian Writing in English means writing by Indian who use English as a "*natural*" means for giving expression to their indigenously-rooted experiences and responses, or unselfconscious, meaningful writing by foreigners, who are either married to Indians or are naturalised Indian citizens.

Indo-Anglian is a descriptive term for original Indian writing in English. It is a confirmation of a tradition behind Indian poetry in English. Indo-Anglian poetry is recognised as poetry issuing and evolving from creative tension between "*two cultural and literary traditions*." Literature written in English by Indians is appropriately and suitably designated as '*Indian English*' Literature. We tend to designate literatures written in English in different countries of the world English literature. But we should bear it in mind that culture but not language gives identity to literature. Thus literatures written in English in Canada and Australia are respectively designated as Canadian Literature and Australian literature. Literature that Indians produce in English is designated as Indian Literature. All other literatures except Sanskrit, in English are known as the body of Indian English literature, and all other literatures of India in Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Hindi, and so on are designated as Indian regional literatures.

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Indians began to use English for creative expression much before Macaulay's *Minutes* and the implementation of his policy on English education. Henry Derozio's volume of poems was published in 1823 and Kashi Prasad Ghosh published his volume of poetry entitled *The Shair and other Poems* in 1830. These two eminent Indians may not be great poets, as their work is largely imitative of such English poets as Scott and Byron, but their historical importance is great, for they belong to that small group of Indians who wrote in English much before Macaulay.

The Indian English poetry began its journey in early nineteenth century, and it is reminiscent of the Romantics and Victorians. The poetic works of Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, and Kashi Prasad Ghosh echo the poetry of Wordsworth, Browning, Byron and Scott. The poetry of the nineteenth century shows signs of development. Toru Dutta holds a very high place in the history of Indo-Anglian poetry. Edmund Gosse, the renowned English critic, was probably the first to notice the high artistic merit of her poetry. Her works are the best expositions of Hindu culture, Hindu traditions, and Hindu ideals. Though Western by training and faith, she always remained an Indian, true to her native culture and beliefs. He had read the Indian classics in original Sanskrit, and absorbed the basic spirit of Hinduism in her own nature. She had deep love for ancient Indian myths, legends, traditions, ways of life and ideology. Her reputation as a great Indian poetess mainly depends on *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hinduism* in which she glorifies the cultural heritage of India.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt was a poet of talent, whose one ambition in life was to win recognition as a writer of English verse. He has left behind two volumes of poetry *Visions of the Past* (1948) and *The Captive Ladie* (1849). He became deeply inspired by the English romantic poets like Byron and the classics like Homer, Dante, Ovid, etc. Historically he is important for he is the first to make a conscious effort to use Indian imagery, express Indian sentiments, and tell an Indian story.

Shoshee Chander Dutt is another early poet who in his *A Vision of Sumeru and Other Poems* tried to achieve Indianness. The Indian gods like Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are brought in but there are also constant references to Christian and Greek mythology. This divided allegiance weakens the effect of Indianness which the poet seeks to create, and makes it ridiculous and unconvincing. Greece Chander's *Cherry Blossoms*, a series of sonnets, is also imitative of English model. Even when the theme is Indian, the imagery remains mostly Christian. Greece Chander rarely tries to use Indian imagery.

B.M. Malabari is a much greater writer than Shoshee Dutt and Greece Chander. In his collection of verses entitled *The Indian Muse in English Gurb* he frequently deals with the blessing of the British rule. Many of them are occasional poems. But his Indianness is seen in those rare poems in which he bewails the loss of the virtues of Indian character. In such verses he speaks the heart of India, yearning for freedom from the foreign yoke. However, Malabari's talent is revealed at its best in the prose works like *The Indian Eye on English Life*.

Swami Ramatirtha, who composed a number of spiritual and mystical lyrics in English, is the pioneer of religious and spiritual poetry. Swami Vivekananda is another powerful spiritual and mystical poet.

The poetry of this period is characterised by intense patriotism and political awakening. R.N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, and H.N. Chattopadhyaya were distinguished poets of the period. Nobakissen Ghose's *The Last Day* and J.M. Tagore's *Rajput Soldier's Farewell*, were also written during this period.

Another great poet at the turn of the century is Manmohan Ghosh, the brother of the renowned Aurobindo Ghosh. His poems, collected in the volume *Songs of Love and Death*, are unlike the poetry of Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, R.N. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo whose imagery and sentiments are particularly Indian. The bulk of his poetry expresses his personal sorrows and sense of loneliness and except for a few poems expressing

nostalgia for India, there is very little of India in his poetry. George Sampson calls him the most remarkable of India poets who wrote in English.

Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India, is remembered as a poetess for *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *Broken Wing*. She carries forward the task left incomplete by the early death of Toru Dutt. Her poetry is conspicuous for the vivid presentation of Indian Atmosphere. She has poetised the India of temples, wandering pilgrims and singers, the sights and sounds, known and familiar to us. It is pictorial, has the romantic colouring and smooth rhythms of the Georgians, and shows perfect mastery over her chosen medium. She achieves signal success in the handling of Indian imagery and the expression of Indian personality.

Sarojini Naidu has described typical Indian scenes in her poetry. She sings of the palanquin-bearers lightly bearing their precious burden "like a pearl on a string". While Toru Dutt described puranic legends of ancient India, Sarojini has immortalised the familiar scenes of everyday life in modern India. She may lack depth a little, but she always writes gracefully. Her metrical dexterity and craftsmanship mark a distinct advance in the handling of the English language and versification.

Rabindranath Tagore is the greatest of the Indians writing in English. His fame as a poet in English rests chiefly on his *Gitanjali*, which is "transcreation" of the Bengali original. He is one of the greatest lyric poets of the world. His lyrics are simple, sublime, serious and majestic. His lyrics are the work of a supreme culture and they are the growth of "the common soil as the grass and the rushis". His thought and imagery are Indian, and his poetry is in the tradition of Indian devotional poetry. His message is spiritual, both Hindu and universal at one and the same time. In his poetry Indianness acquires a universal significance. The poet's spiritual message does not, however, enjoin us to run away from the "fret and fever of life" and seek shelter in a hermitage, but insists on our full participation in the joys and sorrows of life.

Aurobindo Ghosh is an Indo-Indian poet of wide fame. He began his career as writer in English and continued to write well into the twentieth century. In his long poetic career ranging from 1890-1950 he had written lyrics, narrative poems, a comic epic, and a large body of philosophic poems. He made abiding contribution to Indian English poetry by virtue of his narrative power, polished and refined diction, and bold metrical experiments. Dr. S. Iyengar considers him the most outstanding of the Indian writers in English. His poems like *Urvashi*, *Love and Death*, *Savitri* are Hindu in setting, sentiment and expression. *Savitri*, his magnum Opus, is greatest epic in Indian English poetry. It stands next only to Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Aurobindo is a great metrical artist. He tried to adopt a number of classical metres of English. His mystic poetry has a mantric quality, very close and to the Vedic mantras. He is an adept in the use of blank verse and other English metres.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya public *The Feast of Youth*, *Grey Clouds and White Showers*, *A Treasury of Poems, Marks and Farewells* and *Virgins and Vineyards*. His poetry is remarkable for thematic variety. He deftly combines in his poetry Aurobindonian mysticism, and Marxian mysticism. "He has sampled every variety of experience, and exploited every possible mood, pose and stance."

The poetry of this period, though Indian in sensibility, was romantic and was divorced from contemporary problems and reality. The poets preceding the modern age were not concerned with the confusion, bewilderment and disillusion of the times and

no human and social problems are reflected in their poetry. They ignored the reality around them, drought, famine, plague, colonial exploitation, erosion of faith and the disintegration of the modern consciousness.

The poetry of the modern period i.e. the period since the independence of India is characterised by fecundity, experimentation and the vivid presentation of contemporary reality and consciousness. The social and political realities of the times drew the attention of the poets who took special interests in expressing and depicting these in poetry. Rapid urbanization and industrialization of the country, the disintegration of village community, the problem of cultural identity and the change in cultural and social values led to the change and enrichment of the theme of modern Indian poetry in English. Besides, feminism, existentialism, positivism, phenomenology, surrealism and new aestheticism influenced modern Indian poetry in English. The new poets discarded the influence of Romantics and Victorians and followed the prepared ground of Walt Whitman, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

Independence in India does not bring a change only in socio-economic and political fields but in the field of literature as well. New movements in literature are the new uses of language. The new mind requires the new voice, and the new voice is discovered by the writer's genius for intimately registering the idiom of his own world. Poets like Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, R. Parthasarthy, A.K. Ramanujam, Shiv K. Kumar, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, and Pritis Nandi who are globally recognised as poets of high merit speak in a new voice. Their idiom, style, syntax speak of their freedom in handling the themes. Nineteen-sixties and seventies witnessed the birth and development of new poetry in India. The poetry of these new poets have given a new direction to the writing of poetry in English.

The realities of life and being are stressed with definite accents by the contemporary poets. The incipient romanticism and rapid narcissism of the early Indian poetry in English are now discarded in favour of poetry as "*Criticism of life*". Modern Indian poetry in English tries hard to set its roots and develop its own artistic credo. Modern hypocrisy has been satirised in their poems. In *An Introduction* Kamala Das raises the question of human dignity and identity. Indian situations form vital part of the poetry of new poets. Ezekiel deals with the dichotomy of man and his mind. Ramanujam gives us what he sees as the villager's real experience in his poem *A River*. He is very much critical of rituals.

The awareness of the contemporary situation is the key-note of modern poetry. Love is one of the three permanent themes of poetry. Life and death are the other two themes. Love holds a central position in the realms Indian poetry in English of recent times. What is important is the daring portrayal of Love and Sex in their proper perspective. Kamala Das expresses her need for love. Nissim Ezekiel's *Passion Poems* highlights his views on love and sex. Jayanta Mahapatra explores the intricate human relationships. Ezekiel's *Nudes* speaks of the physical and spiritual being at bottom one and the same.

Indian landscape gets described in modern Indian poetry in English. In Keki N. Daruwalla's poetry, the landscape of Northern Indian hills, plains and river is evoked in many poems. Kumar's Indian poems describe the Indian landscape. Modern Indian poets express their melancholy in their poetry. Disappointment is the key-note of this melancholy. Frustration in love strikes a note of melancholy in the poetry of Kamala Das. The existential agony of the modern man remains S.K. Kumar's major concern. The