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ABSTRACT

Indian English poetry has a legacy going back over two hundred years with the first publications appearing as early as 1780 in *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*. Since then, there have been many cycles of new poetic expressions and nationwide literary movements over the years. However, the emergence of Indian poetic modernism as a consolidated identity has not been examined satisfactorily. A few of the major scholarly studies on Indian English poetry at present are Bruce King's *Modern Indian Poetry in English* (2004), Laetitia Zecchini's *Arun Kolatkar and Literary Modernism in India* (2014), and Anjali Nerlekar's *Bombay Modern: Arun Kolatkar and Bilingual Literary Culture* (2016). None of these works have achieved a dedicated examination of poetry anthologies which form the backbone of both the pedagogic and general reader's relationship to the world of poetry. This thesis seeks to question and examine the role(s) anthologies have played in the making of modern Indian English poetry identity. The study attempts to locate the position of the anthology against the backdrop of larger literary culture(s) and examine how it mediates between text/poetry and the larger literary and political tendencies of its times.

The present study attempts to examine Indian English poetry and the arrival of modernist thought as a progressive event which is consecrated within anthologies. Past studies of Indian English poetry have concentrated mainly on the examination of poets, poetry, themes, and devices. The present thesis offers an intrinsic as well as extrinsic understanding of the text within the book, and the book within a larger literary culture.

The objectives which anchored this study from the beginning are few and clear:

1. To contextualize the history of Indian poetry anthologies and investigate the roles they play in the development of thought and new literary culture(s).
2. To examine the changing nature of modern Indian poetry in English as documented in anthologies.
3. To establish anthologies not just as spaces for collection and archiving, but as construction sites where new ideas are grounded and modernism is created.

In order to justify the research objectives, the thesis draws on both historicist and structuralist theoretical frameworks and is guided by a constructivist outlook.

The Making of Modern Indian English Poetry: Towards an Understanding of Anthologies

by Benjamin Karam

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