

## ABSTRACT

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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.

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the major research problems – what roles have anthologies played in the making of modern Indian English poetry or the accepted Indian modernist canon? The chapter seeks to examine the origins of Indian poetic modernism and the contentious relationship the 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian English poets share with their predecessors in the quest for defining modernity. The chapter elaborates the rationale of the study and further provides justification by situating the thesis within a specific tradition, bringing into focus larger modernist discourse which began in the West spearheaded by poets Laura Riding and Robert Graves in *A Pamphlet Against Anthologies* (1928) and T.S. Eliot's letters on anthologies in the *Times Literary Supplement* from 1921.

Chapter Two is dedicated as an extensive survey and examination of anthology as a cultural object. By grounding in historicist understanding, the chapter builds an argument concerning the gradual evolution of the anthology from an archival space into an influential cultural object. The cultural significance of the Grecian *Planudean Anthology*, the *Palantine Anthology*, *Tottel's Miscellany*, *England's Helicon*, and *Palgrave's Golden Treasury* are presented to establish an understanding of the tradition. The chapter further presents observations on how the modern anthology re-entered the Indian soil as part of the European colonial expansion during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, disrupting the publication, distribution, and consumption of printed literature. Finally, the chapter attempts to establish a holistic understanding of Indian poetry anthologies that emerged at the cusp of Indian independence and problematizes the origins of poetic "modernity" by presenting arguments on Indian English poetry's relationship with language and the task of establishing a new national identity. A comprehensive literature survey of Indian poetry anthologies published throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been achieved in this section.

Chapter Three is constructed around the postcolonial argument of modern Indian poetic expression as an "aesthetics of estrangement." This chapter puts forward the main arguments of the thesis that Indian poetic modernism, as a consolidated identity, was constructed within the pages of anthologies through a confluence of four systems functioning in nuanced coordination: the *text*, the *paratext*, *production*, and *consolidation*. The chapter examines select Indian English poetry anthologies within frameworks derived from Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (2004),

Gérard Genette's exploration of the *paratext* in *Paratexts: Threshold of Interpretation* (1997), and Raymond Williams' "epochal theory" in *Marxism and Literature* (1977).

Chapter Four presents an understanding of the culture and sociology of modern Indian poetry anthologies through Pierre Bourdieu's *Field of Cultural Production* (1993). The chapter examines the social dimensions of poets/poetry and different forms of capital at play which ultimately influence the consecration of Indian poetic modernity. Building upon Vladimir Mayakovsky's philosophy of art as "manufacture," the chapter further proposes that the making of modern Indian English poetry occurred through decades of collective cultural deliberations within the pages of anthologies.

Chapter Five of the thesis is included as a coda to conclude the study with an assessment of the new direction(s) of modern Indian poetry as seen in recent anthologies. It re-examines the anthology as a habitat for the "textual afterlife" and argues how new canons are constituted in newer anthologies through a dialectical progression with older canon(s) and older anthologies. The chapter focuses on the directional change of modern Indian poetry with the arrival of economic liberalism in the 1990s. Further arguments concerning new modernism(s), plurality, parallel canons and the circularity of modernist thought as reflected in poetry anthologies are presented in the chapter. Finally, a framework to understand anthologies and new modernism(s) which seems caught in the intersections of the "local" and the "global" tendencies is also presented and problematized in the chapter.

The present study is an inquiry into the origins of modern Indian English poetry as a consolidated identity. It is also a sustained argument on the medium of anthology as a cultural regulator of literary texts in the making of poetic modernism.