Chapter Two

POETRY ANTHOLOGIES: A HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

I

The modern reader has been conditioned to accept anthologies as a readily apparent knowledge unit which can be bought or borrowed with ease. Its presence has become very well ingrained within the academic culture and among general readers. However, understanding its popularity and its historical evolution as a literary genre still requires critical mapping. Classicists and historians have traced the etymology of anthology in the Greek words "Anthos," meaning flower, and "legein," meaning "to collect" (Sharan 6). It was during the Byzantine period that the term anthology moved from meaning "a collection of flowers" to "a collection of poems" (Di Leo 2). Although the meaning of anthology, over the years, has expanded to serve several sub-genres of literature, viz. essays, plays, short stories etc., its first association with literature began with poetry. A broad sweep of literary history reveals that compilation works, in its concrete sense, have existed as early as the 4th century BCE., of which a major portion has been lost to time. Among the recovered records is *Garland (Στέφανος),* compiled by Meleager of Gadara in ancient Greece around 100 BCE. British classicist Alan Cameron argues in his seminal work *The Greek Anthology: from Meleager to Planudes* (1993) that it was Meleager's selection that shaped the character of the classical epigrams and also determined the lineaments of later anthologies (15).

The enterprising nature of Meleager's *Garland* is evident in his inclusion of a prefatory section where he describes his consortium of epigrams as a garland woven together with flowers – a metaphorical comparison of an anthology as a collection of chosen poems (Smith 385). Divided into four sub-books titled Erotic, Dedicatory, Funerary and Rhetorical, *Garland's* subject matter covered the spectrum of the emotional self and contained the works of over forty-six poets. Unlike previous compilers who collected epigrams strictly enclosed by a system of specific class representation, Meleager was the first scholar "who made such a collection solely for its own sake" by gathering the work of past, present, and poets of antiquity together (Smith 385). As an early editor, Meleager recognized the power of the anthology medium which was still in its infancy. Classicist Kathryn Gutzwiller argues that *Garland* "eventually replaced the earlier poetry books from which it had been gathered and became the principal source for the transmission of Hellenistic literary epigrams" (169).

Two aspects of *Garland* seem to stand out during scholarly scrutiny – first is the comprehensiveness of the volume, and second is his editorial acumen. Although *Garland* failed to survive as a whole during the Byzantine era due to substantial abridgement, the salvaged portion became the kernel of what is now commonly regarded as *The Greek Anthology*. Evidence of thematic groupings of epigrams and author alterations have been revealed as highly characteristic of Meleager's anthologizing techniques (A. Cameron 12). Meleager did not merely gather epigrams; rather he enforced an artistic and thematic structure which added a secondary layer of meaning and poetics (Gutzwiller 169). *Garland* may be understood as an early example of how the editorial voice constructs the shape and texture of an anthology, a characteristic which has recurred throughout literary history with subsequent collections. *Garland* exists as a definitive example of a modern anthology in the sense that it attempted both recovery work and the establishment of a substantial literary tradition while making a personal impress as well.

The essence of Meleager's *Garland* was replicated by Philip of Thessalonica around 40 CE (Bali 4). Philip's collection is significant in its novel use of the title *Anthology (ανθολογία)*, and contains a wider selection including the epigrams of Romans who composed in Greek. The objective of his anthology was to achieve an updated version of Meleager's *Garland* by adding new epigrams of more recent poets (Smith 385). After Philip's anthology, it was not until the reign of Emperor Hadrian that a notable collection appeared. Around 140 CE, an anthology of some hundred epigrams appeared composed by Straton of Sardis titled *Musa Puerilis (Μουσα Παιδικη),* its contents dealing prominently with the subject of homosexual love.

The next prominent original anthology appeared after a four hundred years gap around 567-568 CE composed by the Byzantine poet Agathias of Myrina (Bali 4). Generally referred to as the *Circle (Κύκλος)*, the anthology follows the editorial blueprint set by Meleager and Philip of Thessalonica and includes a prefatory section. However, unlike the previous anthologies, Agathias incorporated only the works of contemporaries (Cameron and Cameron 6). It is divided into seven books according to subject matter, covering the spectrum of human experience, including epigrams of life and death, and the aesthetic necessity of humans. Agathias's anthology championed a very early model of the comprehensive/topical anthology (Smith 386). Retrospective investigations have revealed patterns in Agathias's anthology that have also emerged in the later anthologies

throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. His role as an editor, the poetics of his editing, and the selection and exclusion processes he adopted to compile a comprehensive volume are the same editorial tools that anthologists adopt today. In short, Agathias was engaged in the project of archiving contemporaneity.

Around 900 CE, a Byzantine *protopapas*[i] named Constantine Cephalas compiled the most ambitious and comprehensive anthology of the time. By recognizing the need to preserve disappearing collections, Cephalas's anthology recovered the previous works of Meleager, Philip, Straton, and Agathias while adding newer materials as well. The work was left incomplete because of the magnitude of the project and little survives of the manuscript in its original form, but we are still left with an idea of how Cephalas structured his anthology. It comprised fifteen divisions including Christian epigrams, dedicatory, and erotic poems. According to Cameron, the only two concrete manuscripts which survive to this day are the *Palatine Anthology* (henceforth *AP*) from the 10th century, recovered by the French scholar Claude Saumaise in 1606, and the *Planudean Anthology* (henceforth *APl*), compiled by the Byzantine Greek scholar Maximus Planudes. Cameron's research also suggests that a copy of the latter resides in Venice bearing the editor's autograph, signed and dated September 1301 CE (16).

The *Planudean Anthology* is recorded to have enjoyed great popularity and literary usage throughout the late Middle Ages and found equal admiration during the Renaissance. The belated publication of the *Palantine Anthology* at the beginning of the 19th century caused an equally extraordinary reception because it brought back the *Garlands* of Meleager and Philip and the *Cycles* of Agathias back into the consciousness of an expanding reading market (A. Cameron 17). The amalgamation and reworking of the *AP* and *APl* finally led to the creation of what is now regarded as *The Greek Anthology*. It constitutes sixteen books with over 6000 poems, including 3700 Greek epigrams, epitaphs, and elegiac couplets (Bali 4). *The Greek Anthology* exists as an entity that illustrates the continuity of Greek poetic tradition for thousands of years and in doing so preserves a great deal of culture and history.

If we are to understand one fundamental aspect of editing anthologies from these historical relics it is that each anthology is built upon older ones, yet the shape of each new anthology has its own identity. There is a constant undercurrent of both *continuity* and *change* embedded in each volume. An anthology is a cultural story of recovery work

and creativity. To understand the history of these Greek anthologies is to understand the process of literary transmission and also the building of a literary culture.

<div align="center">II</div>

The invention of the movable-type by German inventor Johannes Gutenberg around 1440 enabled the dissemination of the written word more efficiently. The arrival of a technology which furnished the capacity to replicate a text multiple times over meant that any published volume would not be easily destroyed or lost to time. The 18th century historian Edward Gibbon reflected on the new invention with surprise, writing that "the mechanics of a German town had invented an art which derides the havoc of time and barbarism," because until that moment, much of old literature had been partially or completely lost to time (qtd. in Whibley 862). It is believed that when the Imperial Library of Constantinople collapsed almost twenty years after Gutenberg's invention, whatever remained of the glory of the library travelled West where Gutenberg's press waited readily to "eternize them" (Whibley 862).

The ramifications of the Gutenberg press were wide and lasting. The change in the methods of printing and production significantly influenced the distribution and consumption of literature as well. It was around this time that the bound volumes ceased to be just an archival space and became an "object" – a commodity. The fact that these printed volumes became a commodity which could be transacted between the printer and the public meant that the higher purpose held by the scholarly class to interpret text, to guard knowledge, to guard the canon was already being challenged. Scholar Brian Easton in his article "Gutenberg and Globalization" observes that by the end of 17th century majority of the adult population, including women, throughout Europe could read to such a degree that "Members of English congregations would correct their priests using their superior reading of the scriptures" (47).

The written anthologies which were circulated among the esoteric scholarly class and the *crème de la crème* of society began to gain a recognized status. Certainly, the invention of the Gutenberg printing press did not propel anthologies into an overnight sensation, but they were beginning to be recognized as a popular medium. The visionary English publisher Richard Tottel was among the first to develop a model for future anthologies during Elizabethan England, and the first edition of *Songes and Sonettes*

appeared on 5 June 1557. As a form of emblem, the subtitle *Tottel's Miscellany* was added to the original compilation by Edward Arber. This particular anthology may be argued as the specimen model of the modern English poetry anthology. The volume boasted a collection of 272 poems, none of which had been previously published. According to author Stephen Hamrick, it provided a "representative sampling" of the period's poetic output (329). According to Hamrick's findings, the Petrachan poems were so popular that by 1587 *Tottel's Miscellany* had gone through nine editions (329). For the first time, it was available for the pleasure of both the genteel elite as well as the general public. Unlike previous anthologies, *Tottel's Miscellany* became a concrete and dignified volume, assisted by the new printing technology.

Tottel's Miscellany, whose original full title is *Songes and Sonettes, written by the Ryght Honorable Lord Henry Howard, late Earle of Surrey, Thomas Wyatt the Elder and Others* besides presenting a collection of texts also had a lot of hidden objectives within its pages. The grand and candid nature with which Tottel mentions Lord Henry Howard and Thomas Wyatt's name was a strategic attempt at appealing to the nobility to ensure the anthology's instant commercial success. The remarkably long title reveals Tottel's preoccupation with his target audience, including setting up the stage for readership expansion. Therefore, the success of the anthology among the nobility and the general public was not accidental but anticipated. In a section titled "The Printer to the Reader" Tottel dictates to the "common" readers on "what to read" and "how to read" to elevate their taste. He writes:

> If perhaps some mislike the stateliness of stile removed from the rude skill of common ears: I ask help of the learned to defend their learned friends, the authors of this work: And I exhort the unlearned, by reading to learn to be more skilful and to purge that swinelike grossness, that maketh the sweet marjoram not to smell to their delight. (qtd. in Nebeker 995)

Tottel's Miscellany is still arguably upheld as the first-ever English poetry anthology. Tottel set a normative standard for the constituents of an anthology which includes publishing fixtures such as the foreword and preface sections where editors justify their selections to the readers. Tottel utilized the supplementary sections vis-à-vis the *paratextual* matters of his anthology cleverly to sell his volume. To borrow a phrase from Hamrick, Tottel utilized an "arresting rhetorical device" to prove that the finer

objectives of anthologies may extend to expand the reception of certain works by bringing them up to some sort of social relevance (329). *Tottel's Miscellany*, through the conduit of poetry and the anthology, ushered in a culture of poetry anthologies in Elizabethan England influencing many generations of poets and readers to come including Shakespeare who would go on to compose and publish his sonnets (see fig. 1).
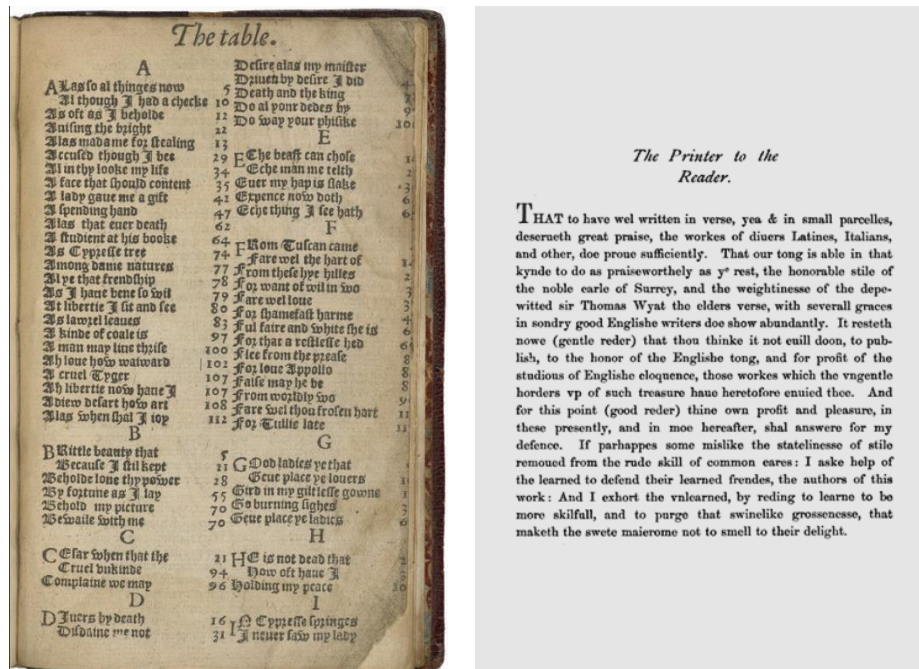

Fig. 1: Table page from Tottel's Miscellany 1574 edition (left) and preface reproduced in the 2011 Penguin edition (right); https://bibliotechal.wordpress.com/tottels-miscellany/

In 1576, almost twenty years after the publication of *Tottel's Miscellany,* another anthology titled *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* was published, compiled by the English poet and playwright of the time Richard Edwards. Similar to *Tottel's Miscellany*, Henry Disle, the publisher of *Paradise* included within the anthology a dedicatory letter to Sir Henry Compton which would ensure his patronage while also establishing a gentle elite readership and commercial success (Nebeker 993). Tottel and Disle cleverly prioritized the nobility, but they were also trying to exploit the market potential that existed among the general reading public. Around the same time, as a stark contrast to the anthology standards that were being set by the two, English publisher Richard Jones published his anthology *Breton's Bower of Delights* in 1591. Jones is forward in appealing to the nobility in his preface concerning the need to make some profit out of his printed volume. He writes: "I am (only) the printer of these chiefly to pressure you, and partly to

profit myself if they prove to your good liking: otherwise my hope is frustrate, my labor lost, and all my cost is cast away" (qtd. in Benett 24). These curtain-raising publisher notes reveal the double-edged nature of anthologies: first, a literary genre that gathers, recovers, and raises standards of poetry; and second, they were also a commodity for economic transaction and profit.

The trajectorial leap that the anthology made since Meleanger's *Garland* is quite remarkable. What began as a passive archival medium has evolved into a sophisticated and powerful tool capable of both announcing and consolidating new ideas. One can surmise from the anatomy of the anthologies discussed so far that with the arrival of printing technology and the establishment of publishing houses, the anthology also transformed from an archival space into a material object – a commodity. Meanwhile, the preface and editorial notes slowly became a fixed headroom for the editors and publishers to spell out their prerogatives.

French literary theorist Gérard Genette in his 1991 study "Introduction to the Paratext" separates the *text* and the *paratext* as two mutually separate entities that constitute a literary work. He argues that the text rarely exists in its "naked state without the reinforcement and accompaniment of a certain number of productions" (261). The *paratext*, according to Genette, cannot be defined as a part of the text, but "they surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it" (261). Critic and essayist Phillipe Lejeune also argues concerning the *paratext* in his book *Le Pacte Authobiographique* (1975) that it is "the fringe of the printed text which, in reality, controls the whole reading" (45). It is this fringe accompaniment to the core textual matter that influences the reception and consumption of books by creating a bracket within which the text may be read and understood. Anthologies being a medium where the core text may be picked and arranged as per the compilers' desire often succumb to the authority of the *paratext*.

All the English anthologies that have been discussed so far employ the *paratext* to achieve their objectives. Volumes such as *Tottel's Miscellany*, *The Paradise of Dainty Devices,* and *Breton's Bower of Delights* succeeded not by portraying the authors of the core text as learned and wise, but through *paratexts* appealed to the desired audience. Tottel constructed his miscellany for a broader appeal to scale readers across all social stations; Henry Disle dedicates his anthology to a nobleman to court his patronage ignoring the public; Richard Jones presented himself as a gentlemen's printer and the

contents of his anthology were targeted towards an intended market – young gentlemen and their desires (Nebeker 992-993). Be it the cajoling of wide readership or the courting of the wealthy class, the English anthologies that appeared after the arrival of the printing technology exploited the *paratext* for profit. It played a crucial role in upholding both literary elitism among the first-tier intended readership and also opened up the anthology to the public market. Thus the success of anthologies was ensured.

By the end of the 16th century, the impact of the printing press in Europe was felt in full force. In addition to being more widely available and more affordable, printed books also helped standardise the vernacular rather than Latin, which had long served as the language of knowledge recording. This hastened the rapid dissemination of ideas and discourse and increased the public literacy rate (Cartwright). It was during this time that anthologies actively became part of a print culture, and print controversy, where all levels of society could participate and serve at different ends – either as contributors, as publishers or as consumers. Cartwright argues that the printing revolution started courting controversy from the mid-16th century onward as monarchs and authorities began to recognize the power of printed matters. The publication of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres (Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium)* in 1543 CE by Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, who placed the Sun as the centre of the solar system in place of the Earth, the publication of Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* in 1353 CE which is renowned for its obscenity, and the publication of the works of Niccolò Machiavelli who was known for his political cynicism, all lead to the creation of institutionalized censorship to regulate the printing industry.

By the 17th century, publishers had to reform to survive in this newly regulated market, thus anthologists became more concerned with the merit of their work. Concerning the need for literary practices to adapt to the changing historical milieu, Barbara M. Benedict argues that "Literary genres are mutable organisms. They cohere, unravel, and reform in the tides of history because they are dependent on the historical conditions of production and reception" (231). The cult of upholding the status of the nobility with so much importance by earlier publishers such as Disle and Jones came to a stop. With the publication of anthologies such as John Flasket's *England's Helicon* (1600), and Francis Davidson's *A Poetical Rhapsody* (1602), the aesthetic and literary merit of the textual matter began to lead as the principal yardstick, while the importance

of the dedicatory *paratext* to the noble class subsided. The advent of more dignified and meaningful anthologies began and it may be argued that the seed of poetic canon germinated along with this new spirit of publication. In this regard, Eric Nebeker comments: "Thus whereas Tottel attempts to dignify and refine English poetry, using the name of Surrey as part of his strategy, in *England's Helicon* and *A Poetical Rhapsody*, poetry has already been refined, English has already been dignified and poets along with it" (997).
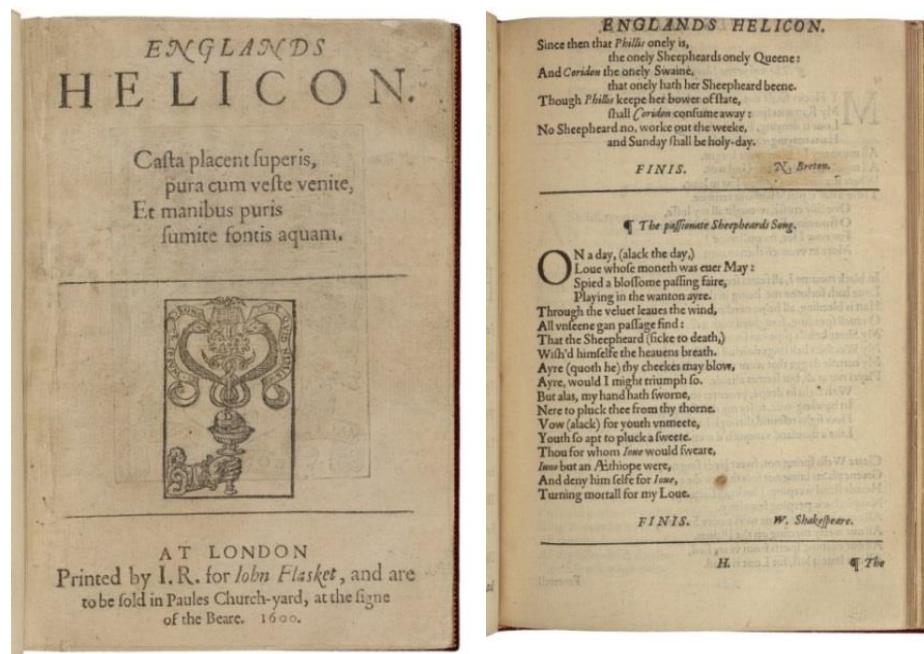

Fig 2: Title page of first edition *Englands Helicon* (1600), and the page containing William Shakespeare's sonnet (right); https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/ englands-helicon-first-edition-contains-sonnet-loves-labors-lost-ascribed

Englands Helicon contained some of the best poets of the time who have since entered into the English literary canon. The first edition [1600] of the anthology contained the works of Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, Walter Raleigh, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare among many others (see fig. 2). Among the poems included were Marlowe's "Come live with me and be my love" and Shakespeare's sonnet from *Love's Labor Lost* Act 4, Scene 3, titled for the anthology as "The passionate Sheepheards Song" (Englands). A second expanded edition of the anthology published in 1614 was prompted by the revival of pastoral sentiment. It gets rid of the *paratexts* including the prefatory materials and dedicatory letters from the first edition to adopt a new anti-court motto: "The Courts of Kings heare no such straines,/ As

daily lull the Rusticke Swaines." (qtd. in "England's Helicon"). The poetry anthology thus became more stylized, and its prerogatives moved from cajoling the nobility for profit to publishing poems which were considered inherently refined and dignified.

The production of anthologies continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, not only in England but throughout Europe. Some of the eminent anthologies that came out between the two centuries include Jan Gruter's *Delitiae* (1608-1614), J.W. Zingref's *Aanhang Unter Schidlicher Auss Gesuchter Gedichten* (1624), Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Beauties of English Poetry* (1767). The 19th century saw the publication of even more well-known poetry anthologies including Thomas Campbell's *Specimens of the British Poets* (1819), Francis Turner Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury of The Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in The English Language* (1861), and Sir Arthur Quiller Couch's *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900* (1900). However, a retrospective gaze into the publishing history and fate of these anthologies will show that some of them have proved to be more enduring than others. Why is it so? One may argue that it is a peculiar judgement of history, one that involves the participation of the publishing world, the marketing culture, and the public reading habits that collectively decide the success and failure of an anthology.

Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* consolidated and presented poetry with such attentiveness that its publication not only revived interest in medieval ballad literature but it also heralded the beginning of the Romantic Age by providing the poets with "an alternative to outworn Neoclassical models as a source of inspiration" (Ballad). Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900* which was published at the cusp of the 20th century has established itself as one of the "classic anthologies of poetry in the English language," with many subsequent specialized English poetry anthologies constructed around it (Woodcock 119). It was reprinted twenty-one times within the next forty years of its publication[ii] and still enjoys immense popularity through revised and updated editions. Literary historians have established that Quiller-Couch's anthology was first designed as a rival to Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury,* but has exceeded the influence of Palgrave's anthology. Palgrave's anthology remains precious, but due to lack of revisions and support it seems to exist only as an emblem, as if it were some relic of Victorian antiquity.

On the other hand, meditating on the long-standing tradition of anthologies that preceded his, Quiller-Couch writes in the introduction to his 1919 edition: "I can claim that the help derived from them – though gratefully owned – bears but a trifling proportion to the labour, special and desultory, which has gone to the making of my book" (7). It may be argued that the comprehensiveness of the project, the regularity of its revision(s), together with the support of Oxford's prevailing market share within the academic world have provided crucial assistance in establishing and maintaining momentum and influence of Quiller-Couch's anthology.

The Oxford anthologies that were commissioned in the 1970s relied upon a different kind of critical taste judgement. Instead of opting for revision of Quiller-Couch's anthology, Helen Gardner was commissioned to compile *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1950* in 1972 (Woodcock 120). Gardner not only came up with a fresh selection of poetry remapping the literary landscape between 1250 and 1900 – the scope of Quiller-Couch's 1919 anthology – but added another fifty years' worth of poetry selection into the anthology rounding off at 1950. Another commissioned anthology published in the same year is Philip Larkin's *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse* (1973). Larkin's anthology along with W.B. Yeats's anthology *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), and Michael Robert's anthology *Faber Book of Modern Verse* (1936) all wrestled with the task of defining modern poetry during the time of their publication. Over the years, Yeats's anthology has come under critical scrutiny for his editorial decision of considering the beginnings of modernism as early as 1892. Moreover, the choice of flooding his anthology with poems of his colleagues and friends of The Rhymers' Club, which he co-founded in 1890 has not supported his editorial fame either. It has been described as "parochial and opinionated" and even discredited as "being perhaps the worst of all the Oxford Books" (Woodcock 122). On the other hand, Robert's Faber anthology and Larkin's Oxford anthology remain well regarded for their forward-gazing selection and for putting forth critical judgements and unbiased editorial arguments at the forefront. However, the task of defining modernism has not been easy or unanimous even within the Western canon.

III

In Indian literary history, the anthology genre may be considered both old and new. Although much of ancient Indian literature have been known to be orally transmitted,

India's acquaintance with the anthology medium dates back as early as the *Rigveda (Sanskrit: "The Knowledge of Verses")* whose origins has been located around 1500 BCE. Studies have revealed that it was orally preserved until it was written down around 300 BCE, a time which still precedes the Greek anthologies by almost two centuries. The *Rigveda* anthology is composed of 1,028 poems grouped into ten *circles* or *mandalas* (Rigveda). Among the recorded examples of verse anthology of Indian literature is the Sanskrit language collection *Kavindra-Vachana-Samuchaya or Subhashitaratnakosa*[iii] compiled by the Buddhist scholar Vidyakara in the latter half of the 11th century (Subhasitaratnakosa). It is believed to have been recovered in two separate versions in manuscript form but disappeared again in Bengal with the arrival of the Islamic period in the Indian subcontinent during the 12th century. Of the two versions in existence, the one located in Ngor Evam Chokden monastery in Tibet is argued to be more authentic. It is estimated to have been compiled around the later years of the decade following 1090 CE ("An Anthology").

During the time of British rule in India and its eventual expansion into the neighbouring territories, the manuscript landed in the hands of a British scholar by the name of F.W. Thomas who published the anthology under the conjectured title *Kavindra-Vachana-Samuchaya* in 1912 (Bali 8). Only 275 names could be identified; the rest of the contributing authors remain anonymous. It remains unclear whether this anonymity was done by choice or due to a lack of proper records. His inclusion of names such as Vallana, Vasukalpa, Monovinoda, Yogeshwara, and Abhinanda reflect Vidyakara's preference for the Eastern poets, most notably the Bengali descendants. Much like the erotic epigrams of Ancient Greece, Vidyakara's anthology contained a total of 1738 verses which were grouped into fifty themes, consisting of the sacred, the mundane and the physical, love, nature, death, human follies, and the arts (An Anthology). Vidyakara's anthology is argued to be the oldest anthology in existence, and the editorial liberty/responsibility he took to preserve what he believed was good or important is an indicator of the fundamental nature of human aesthetic judgment.

Almost a century after the compilation of Vidyakara's anthology, a second anthology of Sanskrit verses was compiled in ancient Bengal titled *Saduktikarnamrita* by Shridharadasa in 1205 CE. It is the second anthology of Sanskrit verses compiled in ancient Bengal containing 2377 verses (Saduktikarnamrita). Continuing with the

tradition, Shridharadasa divided his anthology into five sections or themes called *Pravaha (streams)*, and each *Pravaha* again sub-divided into several *Vichis (waves)*. Here again, we see the imperative of thematic categorization come into operation to structure the anthology. Shridharadasa's ambition to build an archive of important verses is visible as it helped preserve the Sanskrit *kavyas* of authors such as Jayadeva, Umpatidhara, Govardharna and also the works of Kalidasa and Amaru (Saduktikarnamrita).

Recorded history has shown evidence of the existence of multiple anthologies of Sanskrit origin through the centuries that followed. This includes the 13th century *Suktimuktavali* of Jalhana (1260 CE) which was a commissioned anthology, and which has since enjoyed wide recognition and larger historical value for preserving the Sevana history. The 14th century saw *Sarngadharapaddhati* (1363 CE), a collection of Sanskrit verses compiled by Sarangadhara, believed to have originally contained over 6300 verses. The existing copy is composed of over 282 authors and a total of 4689 verses. The 15th century saw the compilation of another celebrated anthology called *Subhashitavalis* (1417 CE)[iv] by Vallabha containing over 3527 verses and authored by 360 poets (Sastri 415). It is apparent from historical evidence that the etymology of "anthology" and its practice as a genre may have originated in Ancient Greece and the collective West respectively, but the practice of compiling anthologies for archiving poems has been in existence within the literary tradition of Ancient India as well.

Attempts of a coherent and systematic rediscovery and understanding of the corpus of Ancient Indian anthologies is not an easy task to accomplish, and is not within the scope of this study, but within the scattered immensity of literary expression, a tradition of preserving verses is visible. The inherent characteristic of the anthology is the preservation and dissemination of large bodies of important texts, and making their presence voluntarily known over time. Not only do anthologies help in the construction of archives, but they also construct a systematic organization of texts – a narrative. The anthologies that have been discussed so far: the Grecian epigrams, the European miscellanies, and the Indian Vedas all carry fingerprints of certain obsessiveness with creating a taxonomy of specimens; in our case, poems. It reveals the nature of compilers and editors and how they succumb to the practice of subjective aesthetic judgment. The

contents of an anthology become records of literary history, but they also constitute a form of filtered history.

IV

The first Indo-European interaction began in the 4ᵗʰ century when Alexander the Great led his army into the northwest of the subcontinent (Wickramasinghe 70). However, it was between the 16ᵗʰ and 18ᵗʰ centuries that the Indian subcontinent went through a transformative change in the production of printed literature due to the scientific contact brought by the missionaries, particularly of the Jesuit society. The Indo-European interaction that gained prominence between the 16ᵗʰ and 18ᵗʰ centuries, however, was not a "one-way movement" as India was discovered, studied, and cartographed by Indologists and their knowledge subsequently also transferred to the West (Kalapura 436-437). This European project of discovery and expansion cannot be separated from the missionary crusade, and the European printing technology and the enterprise of publishing accompanied wherever they went. The first Indian movable printing press set up in 1556 in St. Paul's College, Goa by the Jesuits dominated and controlled the printing culture and transfer of knowledge for the next 150 years. Moreover, the arrival of protestant missionaries in South India in the 18ᵗʰ century along with the subsequent entry of British colonial administrators in the printing business in the 19ᵗʰ century also had their effects on literary and cultural production within the Indian subcontinent (Kalapura 440).

During the 19ᵗʰ century, the effects of this colonial and cultural exchange with the West began to show in the anthologies published during the time. A systematic effort can be seen within Tamil language anthologies which were being edited by scholars belonging to the Tamil Christian demography. A few notable publications that came out during the colonial years include *Biographical Sketches of the Dekhan Poets* (1829) compiled by Caully Venkataramaswami, *The Tamil Plutarch* (1859) compiled by Simon Casie Chitty, and J.R. Arnold's anthology *Pavalar Chariththira Theepakam* (1886), which exclusively gathered the works of undiscovered Tamil poets. Originally composed in the Tamil script, Arnold's anthology was also accompanied by an English title: *The Galaxy of Tamil Poets* indicating an interest in seeking an audience from the English-speaking population. Anthologies announce new ideas and create canon by gathering great works; however, it is sometimes comprehensiveness that leads to the establishment

of a strong literary culture. Thus, an anthology like Arnold's, by offering a more representative and extended list of poets had its virtue. It has greatly helped in expanding and strengthening Tamil literary history[v] and remains in print to this day, with the most recent edition printed as late as 2020.

On the other hand, the anthologies that were compiled by British scholars in India had a different motive altogether. It was both a scholarly endeavour and a nationalist project for them. They were mostly outcome-oriented anthologies with a hidden curriculum, designed keeping in mind the Indian students. A strong argument may be made that the British-edited anthologies were a direct product of Macaulay's *Minutes*. In their hands, the anthology evolved further into an administrative tool, almost an institution unto itself. Mention may be made of William Price's two-volume anthology *Hindee and Hindoostanee Selections* (1827) published in Calcutta. Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia observe in their critical study *India's Literary History* (2004) that Price's anthology was prescribed as a curriculum text for the "British civilian and military students and later for the Indian students at Fort William College in Calcutta" (3). The colonial regime, in their attempt to establish a dominion over the "natives," had to acquaint themselves with the literature and culture of the colony, and it may be argued that Price's anthology is the by-product of such an effort. Apart from the anthology, Price also worked on other publications including *A New Grammar of the Hidoostanee Language* (1827) which was published in London and played a crucial role in educating the British military recruits in the language(s) of their colony (Busch 277). One of the reasons the anthology medium was capitalized on by the colonial administrators was because it catered to the specific needs of both the British and the Indians. For the British, it provided critical insight into understanding the inner workings of the literature of the colony and its population, and for India, the reintroduction of the scholarly anthology format assisted in the construction of an organized archive which enabled the preservation and enlargement of their literary historiography.

Apart from William Price, the enterprise of anthology-making was taken up by many other British scholars of the time including Charles E. Gover, whose anthology *The Folk Songs of Southern India* (1871), published in Madras (now Chennai), attempted to present an assortment of the Dravidian folk song tradition by reaching out to languages such as Canarese, Badaga, Coorg, Tamil, Cural, Telegu, and Malayalam and

presenting the translated verses in English. In his introduction to the anthology, Gover writes:

> Two great objects have been kept in view throughout. First, to exhibit irrefragable evidence of the real feelings of the mass of the people, and thus enable Europeans to see them as they are. Second, to draw public attention to a great body of excellent vernacular literature, in the hope that other persons, far better qualified for the task than myself, will follow the enquiry and publish critical editions and translations of the great ethical work of the Dravidian Augustan period. (Introduction vi)

The beginning of the 20th century saw the publication of Theodore Douglas Dunn's *India in Song: Western Themes in English Verse by British and Indian Poets* (1918). Transparent in its pedagogical intent, the volume attempted to establish the presence of a synergy between Britain and India. Dunn boldly declares the existence of quality English verse by Indians. He writes in his introduction: "It is not generally known that during this century much good English verse was produced by Indians" (qtd. in Parthasarathy 1). In the same year, another anthology edited by Dunn titled *The Bengali Book of English Verse* (1918) was published with a foreword by Rabindranath Tagore (see fig. 3), who writes:

> The following anthology has its greatest interest in being a self-recording evidence of the earliest response that Bengal gave to the touch of the West. I think we can safely assert that she is the only country in the Orient which has shown any distinct indication of being thrilled by the voice of Europe as it came to her through literature. (Foreword xi)

Tagore continues in his foreword his confidence in the "new" direction of Indian literature, which admittedly the West has acted as a catalyst to make the poets reinvigorated.

> The breath of inspiration, coming from the West, has kindled the original spark in us into a flame that lay smothered in the ashes of dead habits and rigidity of traditional forms. This has been illustrated by the course our literature has taken, almost completely abandoning its earlier foreign bed, finding its natural channel in the mother tongue. The following collection of English poems written by

Bengali authors also proves it, in which the earlier writings are timorously imitative, while the later ones boldly burn with their own fire, daring to challenge time's judgement with their claim of immortality. (Foreword xiii)

The problem with newness vis-à-vis modernity is one such that it cannot be located to a certain historical point anymore. It becomes a relational identity. Tagore thought the poems that they were writing in 1918, which are included in Dunn's anthology were unique and modern as opposed to the past, which he agrees were imitative. He is justified in taking that viewpoint, but it is a viewpoint that is taken by every generation against their own past. This same argument is made by P.Lal in the 1950s against Tagore and his contemporaries, and the same argument is made by Mehrotra in the 1990s against both of them. Modernism thus becomes a cyclical act of the new against the old – a contentious case of defining the present through the past.
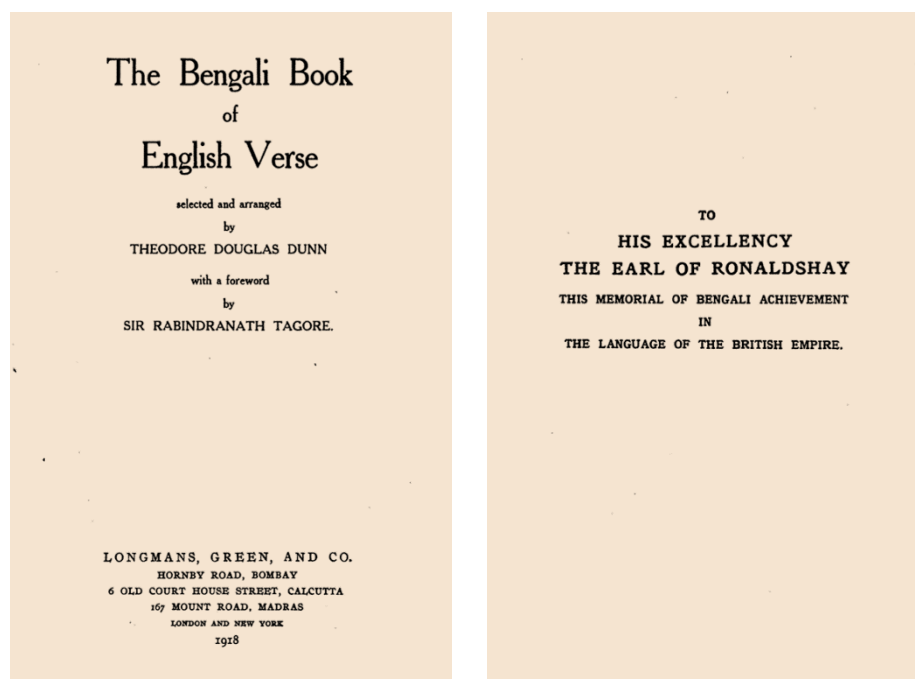

Fig. 3: Title page and dedicatory page of *The Bengali Book of English Verse* (1918); https://archive.org/details/cu31924091263784/page/n3/mode/2up

Tagore's words echo Kalapura's sentiment that the "Indo-European interaction was not a one-way movement" (436). It may be argued that on a deeper stratum of the colonial years, a cultural and literary exchange, consisting of an eagerness to learn and reflect was germinating on both sides. Three years later in 1921, Dunn would release *Poets of John Company*, an omnibus anthology gathering poetry composed by

Englishmen in India, including a poem by colonial administrator Warren Hastings titled "John Company". However, Dunn confesses in his introduction that the poems collected may be devoid of significant literary merit but could be important owing to the historical milieu in which they were composed. One of the primary objectives of the anthology was to showcase the assimilation of the Indian experience in the Englishmen's verse. He writes:

> Whatever may be said finally upon the value of the work produced by our exiled poets, their range and enterprise have been considerable. The best of them sought to interpret Eastern life and thought through the medium of English poetry, and so to assimilate their knowledge and experience of India as to enrich the literary inheritance of their countrymen. (Introduction xiii)

Not long after the publication of Dunn's anthologies, English editor Gwendoline Goodwin published her volume *An Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1927) and it invited a fresh examination of the verses being written in British India. For the first time, Goodwin's anthology was receptive enough to recognize a change in the poetic landscape and used "modern" to present new meaning in the contents of her anthology. Goodwin's volume not only included selections of verses composed in English but also translated works of the Punjabi, Bengali, and Marathi variants. Published by John Murray in London as part of their "Wisdom of the East" series, her anthology set a new tone by acting as a mediator between the East and the West, and also linguistically unified the literature of a pluralistic nation. She writes in her introduction: "We of the West do not want from the East poetic edifices built upon a foundation of Yeats and Shelley and Walt Whitman. We want genuine Taj Mahals and Juma Masjids, cameos of rural sweetness and the hopes of faithful hearts" (9-10).

Goodwin's anthology is both radical and unique in the sense that the publication of "modern" Indian verse coincided with the inclusion not just of poetry composed in English but also of vernacular poetry translated into English. This, to some extent, addresses the discrepancy that has always existed between the different schools of the Indian literati regarding the true nature of "modernity" in Indian poetry. It may be argued that modernism in Indian poetry came into existence at the "contact zone" of the East and the West. This crisis or contention still lingers to this day. The anthologies that Dunn and Goodwin introduced were self-aware of the cultural ties that existed between Britain

and India, and may even be understood as diplomatic anthologies, which is a peculiar kind of anthology which have become gradually popular over the years (Appendix 1). Goodwin's anthology exists as an indicator of how colonial cultural policies, by unifying the linguistic plurality through translation, set the tone for future anthologies.

The modernity that Goodwin was trying to promote was heavily interpreted through the Western gaze and was an Orientalist project. A lot of the *paratexts* surrounding the anthology testifies to this argument. The anthology itself is just one constituent of a series titled "Wisdom of the East." The natural association of "wisdom" with the "East" itself is a very rudimentary Orientalist outlook. She continues to comment, perhaps keeping in mind the Western readers, about the moment of crisis that the Indian poets were going through in her introduction:

> The Indian poet of to-day is torn, like the Indian painter, between admiration for Western models and a desire to mould himself thereon, and an inherent Indian tradition that runs in his veins and will not be denied. Indeed, it is pity to deny it. Sir Edmund Gosse persuaded Sarojini Naidu to tear up her poems about English life and to write of her own Indian bazaars and cities, villages and festivals, for which persuasion we are indeed indebted to Sir Edmund. (Introduction 9)

Some fifty years ago, before the publication of Goodwin's anthology, the sentiment towards Indian writing in English was quite different. European critics of the time including Edmund Gosse, James Darmesteter, and André Theuriet were all drawn towards the work of Toru Dutt because it "crystalized for them a marvelous synthesis of the East and the West" (Jagannathan 13). What Goodwin was trying to accomplish with her anthology was an attempt to present a new kind of poetry which embodied a form of nationalistic hubris. This was the modernity that she wanted to introduce to the new India of the 20th century. However, her ambition seems to resonate with what V.S. Naipaul, a child of the colonial regime, would later reflect, that "the history of old India was written by its conquerors" (qtd. in Casanova 211). These are paradoxical and painful truths, as the concepts of country, heritage, and culture that were present in Indian literature had a lot of their roots in the hands of the English cultural mediators. It is also for this reason that the current literary production in the Indian subcontinent is still tied to the historical "event" of decolonization (Mufti 459).

V

The "event" of India's independence in 1947 created a permanent fissure and a shift in overall attitude towards poetry writing and poetry anthology production in the years that followed. Over and above there has been a growing inclination to locate, and even plant, the inception of the modern Indian poetry movement to the year 1947. Bruce King argues that "by 1947 the situation had changed and with the concern of new poets became their relationship to and alienation from the realities of their society" (1). Jeet Thayil also writes in the prefatory section of his anthology *60 Indian Poets* (2008) that the Independence is a "convenient starting point for a look at modern Indian poetry" (xv). However, modernism in Indian poetry remains a vague and polyphonic concept that requires constant re-examination. It may be argued that the desire to anchor the literary shift to the "event" of Independence may stem from an unexpressed element of nationalist fervour as it satisfies a point of origin that reflects the new national identity.

The ideological shift(s) that emerged post-independence began to reflect in the anthologies that were published in subsequent decades. Mapping nationhood became central in many anthologies, and the English language became the standard linguistic medium of most modern major poetry anthologies. Karl Marx observed in the middle of the 19th century that the English language was "causing a social revolution in India" by acting as the "unconscious tool of history" (qtd. in Dasgupta 208). Marx's observation, to some degree, foretold the emergence of a modern India, but his understanding failed to predict the kind of contentious relationship that Indians would develop with the language. The significant anthologies published during the cusp of the Independence years all highlighted the importance of the language used as evidenced in the titles (Appendix 1). Anthologies such as V.N. Bhushan's *The Peacock Lute: Anthology of Poems in English by Indians* (1945) published in Bombay, and Fredoon Kabraji's *This Strange Adventure: An Anthology of Poems in English by Indians 1828 - 1946* (1947) published in London were beginning to assimilate the English language as the language of national identity.

Throughout the 1950s, the newly independent India carried the project of creating a self-affirming literary identity within the anthology enterprise. Anthologies of Indian poetry in English such as A.V. Rajeswara Rau's *Modern Indian Poetry* (1958), and K. R. Rao and P.Lal's *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry* (1959) were published by Kavita in New

Delhi, both titles implying the arrival of newness. While Rau's anthology is a collection of English translations of Indian poetry written between 1879-1939, K.R. Rao and P. Lal's anthology declared explicitly in their introduction that they were breaking away from the "greasy, weak-spined and purple-adjectived "spiritual" poetry" (Introduction iii). They advocated instead a new style of poetry which dealt with "concrete experience" in "concrete terms" and accentuated the importance of the "private voice"(Introduction vi). Both anthologies proclaim themselves as modern, however, these two anthologies clubbed together under the Indian modernist project is paradoxical because Rau's anthology is a backwards-gazing volume while Rao and P.Lal's anthology suggests what the future of modern Indian poetry should be. The confluence point for the two volumes is the English language. Like Goodwin's anthology, the Indian modernist anthology found itself as the juncture of verses composed in English as well as verses translated into English.

The pursuit of this new search for Indian modernity and literary identity however did not proceed without scrutiny from critics. Poet and writer Buddhadeva Bose was one of the major figures who were openly cynical about the new direction Indian poetry was taking. His entry in *The Concise Encyclopedia of English and American Poets and Poetry* (1963) articulates the uncertainty of English language poetry as the future of modern Indian poetry altogether:

> As late as 1937, Yeats reminded Indian writers that 'no man can think or write with music and vigour except in his mother tongue' to the great majority of Indians this admonition was unnecessary but the intrepid few who left it unheeded do not yet realise that 'Indo-Anglian' poetry is a blind alley, lined by curio shops, leading nowhere. (qtd. in Goonetilleke 338)

P. Lal responded to Buddhadeva Bose's charges by bringing out the most ambitious anthology of the time – *Modern Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology and A Credo* (1969) published by his own establishment the Writers Workshop (henceforth WW). Lal's anthology was a comprehensive volume containing the poetry of 132 poets and running close to 600 pages. Moreover, to probe the controversial language issue which was at the heart of the literary identity of new India, Lal sent out questionnaires to well-known writers of his time and published the responses alongside. Unfortunately, Lal's anthology was poorly received, perhaps the reason resides in the anthology trying

to be too many things at once because the credo showed little to no relation with the actual poetry included in the anthology (Bose 52). It lacked critical standards, and it lacked interest in the establishment of a canon because the anthology was preoccupied with defending against Bose's accusations. It may be understood as important, even necessary at the time, but Lal's anthology in retrospect is overwhelmed with paratextual matters that did not necessarily serve its objectives in the long run.

The next major anthology that followed Lal's volume was Vinayak Krishna Gokak's anthology *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry 1828-1965* published in 1970. It was a comprehensive volume constituting the creative works of 108 poets, which also marked the entry of The Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters into the anthology publication space. As per the data available on the publisher's portal, it remains in print at present, the most recent print being the 2017 edition (Sahitya). Gokak's anthology is reminiscent of Palgrave and Quiller-Couch's anthologies in sentiment, yet it fell short of all expectations as it was criticized upon publication by the critics (Dulai 185). Gokak anthology has been accused of merely providing "a total view of the active Indo-English poets" (Nandakumar 80). But unlike Lal's volume, Gokak's anthology did set out to achieve its objective of accumulation – not the specific announcement of new verse – but through its astute selection, it revived texts which had long been buried in time. Gokak's volume thus gained the title as the "documentary anthology" among future scholars (Bali 11).

The 1970s continued the experimentation and publication of Indian poetry anthologies. Two arguably significant anthologies appeared in 1972: *Indian Poetry in English 1947-1972* edited by Pritish Nandy, and *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English: An Assessment and Selection* edited by Saleem Peeradina. Both these anthologies attempted a radical break from the regular model of anthology compilation. Nandy's volume by considering 1947, the year of India's independence, as the point of origin of his anthology invokes a sense of figurative independence from the old world and the establishment of a certain kind of modernity within the Indian poetic identity. Peeradina, on the other hand, distills Lal's one hundred and thirty-two poets in *An Anthology and A Credo* down to a mere selection of fourteen poets. In doing so Peeradina challenges Lal's *An Anthology and A Credo* by setting up a rigorous critical standard that the former volume allegedly lacked. Peeradina's use of "Assessment" in the

title of his anthology is quite literal. Although Peeradina's work is a slim volume of just over a hundred pages, the anthology offered – through the comments of six critics – an "intelligent and intelligible analysis of the works of the poets anthologised" (Taneja 65). Anthologies like Peeradina's *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English* reveal how the modern canon was being slowly constructed and justified within the anthology itself.

The year 1974 marked another prolific year for Indian anthologies as more anthologies of Indian poetry in English from well-known editors appeared including *Indian Poetry in English Today* edited by Pritish Nandy, *An Anthology of Indo-English Poetry* edited by Gauri Deshpande, and *New Writing in India* edited by Adil Jussawalla were released within months of each other, intensifying the anthology war. Arun Kolatkar's revered collection *Jejuri*, and Adil Jussawalla's *Missing Person* followed in 1976. In 1977 Pritish Nandy's anthology *Strangertime: An Anthology of Indian Poetry in English* was published by Hind Pocket Books, a small independent press based in New Delhi. Although out of print for many years, it maintains a cult status among readers for its poetic selection which reflects the raw energy of the mid-70s. Nandy's anthology contained the works of Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Gieve Patel, Imtiaz Dharker, Kamala Das, Keki N Daruwalla, Nissim Ezekiel, Ruskin Bond, and it was the first time Jayanta Mahapatra and Agha Shahid Ali's poems were anthologized ("Strangertime"). In the introduction to his anthology, Nandy observes that his anthology, "attempts to capture the drama, the intensity, and the sheer vitality of the poetry being written today," and is an archive of the poetic output of the preceding decade which he argues is a period when Indian English poetry abandoned self-consciousness about using British poetry as the lodestart and "found itself". He writes in the definitive, "Our roots lie here; this is our literature." (qtd. in "Strangertime")

Although Nandy's anthology was published as a cheap paperback edition with the main purpose of getting the volume into the hands of as many readers as possible to create an audience for the new poetry it has since become an object of "considerable historical value" ("Strangertime"). Nandy's volume was soon followed by *Indian Verse in English: A Contemporary Anthology* (1977) edited by Syed Ameeruddin and published by Poets Press India, Madras, and *Hundred Indian Poets: An Anthology of Modern Poetry* (1977) edited by Pranab Bandyopadhyay and published by OUP.
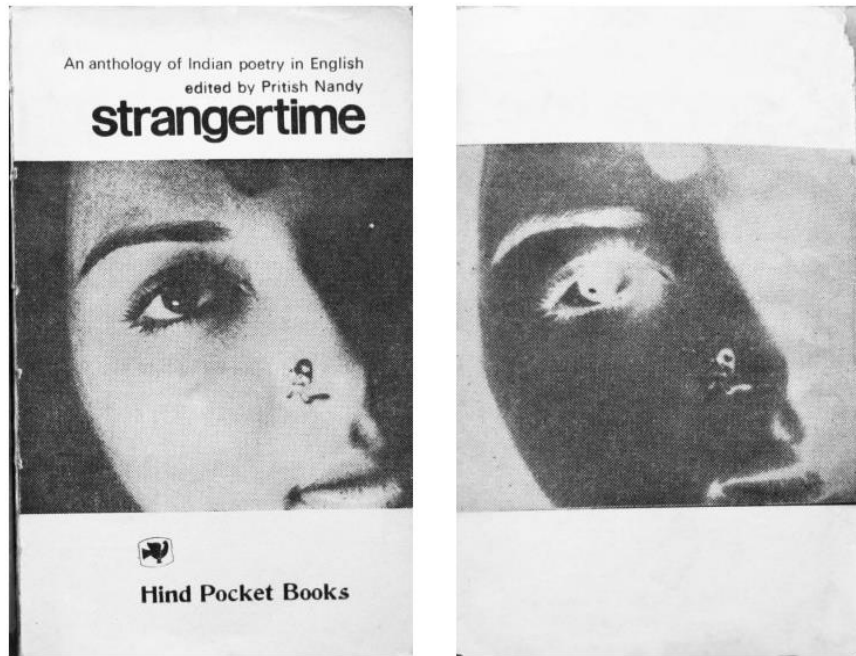
Fig. 4: Front title page (left) and back cover (right) of Pritish Nandy's *Strangertime* (1977); https://www.cse.iitk.ac.in/users/amit/books/nandy-1977-strangertime-anthology-of.html#intro

The patterns of the 1970s anthologies are very marked, they revelled in collecting what was current and what was new. Many of them were striving towards a poetic exploration of the emerging new breed of poets without necessarily being concerned with the establishment of hard canons. However, it was the publication of R. Parthasarathy's *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets* (1976) by OUP that deflated the spirit of the decade by bringing the anthologies back on the tracks of the canon war. With an astute selection of only ten poets, Parthasarathy's anthology presented itself as the most canonical anthology of its time. It is evident from the publication histories of these anthologies that the emergent journey of modern Indian poetry and the spirit of experimentation and production is always undercut by the abrupt establishment of "standards."

During the 1980s the anthology wars continued in the Indian literary space. Parthasarathy's volume was challenged by the publication of Keki N. Daruwalla's anthology *Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-1980* in 1980. And in a significant turn, P. Lal who had spearheaded the new poetry movement during the 1950s and 1960s was excluded entirely from Daruwalla's pages. The newer anthologies rendered him an unimportant voice in the establishment of the modern poetic canon. In our retrospective assessment, we may argue that what the 1980s accomplished with the publication of

verse anthologies is the celebration of the new poetic sensibilities – what was "contemporary" and "urgent". Titles such as *19 Poets: An Anthology of Contemporary Indo-English Poetry* (1981) edited by Keshav Malik, *New Voices in Indo-English Verse* (1981) edited by Syed Ameeruddin, *New Dimensions in Indo-English Poetry* (1981) edited by O.P. Bhatnagar, and *Modern Trends in Indo-Anglian Poetry* (1982) edited by H.S. Bhatia began to appear. All these efforts point towards a unified direction – the presentation and investigation of newness in Indian poetry in English.

The decade of the 1990s began with the publication of multiple poetry anthologies edited by established poets and published by major houses. Vilas Sarang's *Indian English Poetry since 1950: An Anthology* came first in 1990, and was followed by Kaiser Haq's *Contemporary Indian Poetry* (1990), Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992), Makarand Paranjape's *Indian Poetry in English* (1993), and *The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry* (1994) edited by Vinay Dharwadker and A. K. Ramanujan. Two significant developments unfolded in the anthologies of the 1990s: the first was the serious entry of publishing giant Oxford, and the second was the culmination of the canon wars. The peculiarity of the anthologies of the decade was not merely in publishing poetry but in the critical assessment of poetry and the attempts to establish a unified canon. Mehrotra in the introduction to his *Twelve Modern Indian Poets* boldly claims that the "origins of modern Indian poetry in English go no further back than the poets in this anthology" (Introduction 1). Mehrotra further justifies his selection by arguing that it was necessary to reveal a certain character within modern Indian poetry:

> I have wanted to reveal through a particular choice of poets and poems the sharp-edged quality of Indian verse. It is not its best-known aspect, and my introductory notes to the poets reflect both the moments when I succeeded in discovering it and those when I was disappointed.
>
> There have been in the past similar anthologies from the post-Independence period – by Saleem Peerandina (1971), R. Parthasarathy (1976), Keki N. Daruwalla (1980), Villas Sarang (1990), and Kaisar Haq (1990) – but none of them made any difference to the accepted shape of Indian verse in English…. (Introduction 8)

From the overview of the anthologies discussed so far, it may be fairly inferred that the publication of poetry anthologies in India has been a steady enterprise since the middle of the 20th century. However, the world of Indian poetry and its production in recent years has been much more unprecedented and equally exciting. In a span of merely twenty years – between 2000 and 2020 – more than fifty anthologies of Indian poetry in English were published (Appendix 1). A quick review of this growing number of publishers reveals the general interest of both independent publishers and major publishing houses to participate in the emerging poetry market. However, one peculiar characteristic of the majority of these recent publications is that they no longer deal with fundamental questions concerning literary culture or national identity. There is a general tendency towards being more topical and specialized, even culturally scrutinizing in their subject matter.

VI

The post-2000 poetry anthologies, by exploring fissures that exist within the geopolitical fabric of Indian nationhood, cut through the larger narrative of canon building. Anthologies like Eunice de Souza's *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology* (1997) published by OUP, and E.V. Ramakrishnan and Anju Makhija's *We Speak in Changing Languages: Indian Women Poets 1990-2007* (2009) published by the Sahitya Akademi have redirected the anthology discourse by introducing new trajectories – one concerning gender representation disparity that existed in earlier anthologies. This experimentation of the medium has continued with other Sahitya Akademi publications including *Poetry with Young People* (2007) edited by renowned poet and playwright Gieve Patel. The contents of the anthology were cultivated during an annual workshop conducted at the Rishi Valley School, Andhra Pradesh where participants aged 12 to 18 were drawn into detailed discussions of great poems and made to develop their own (Arwind).

On the other side of the publishing spectrum, the 2000s also saw Penguin India enter the anthology space with serious verse anthologies including *60 Indian Poets* (2008) edited by poet Jeet Thayil, and *Dancing Earth: An Anthology of Poetry from North East India* (2009) co-edited by poets Robin Ngangom and Kynpham Nongkynrih. Both anthologies are comprehensive and ambitious in addressing their respective objectives. Thayil's anthology, similar to P.Lal's 1969 anthology, attempts to define modern Indian poetry through its sweeping survey of poets. Ngangom and Nongkynrih's

anthology, on the other hand, introduces to the readers a collection of poetic works from an underrepresented region of the Indian subcontinent. *Dancing Earth* follows the model set by Goodwin by including both English works and translated works.

Dancing Earth also exists along the tracks of an older 1972 anthology titled *An Anthology of Modern Kashmiri Verse 1930-1960* edited by Trilokinath Raina and undertaken with a grant issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. The existence of these anthologies, and the literary and territorial fissures they address reveal an apparent tension in India's national literary narrative. These anthologies have also given cause for a different kind of anthology war in India. The recent publication of the two-volume *The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North East India* (2010) edited by Tilottoma Misra has also contributed in strengthening the argument. The non-inclusion of Kashmiri poet Agha Sahid Ali's poems in both *60 Indian Poets* (2008) and *The Penguin Book of Indian Poets* (2022) edited by Jeet Thayil is a blunder. Although Thayil justifies in his introduction to *60 Indian Poets* that "The omissions are because, in each case, copyright holders would not part with the necessary permissions" (xvii), it is an omission that exists along the fissure of national lines.

The recent decade beginning from 2010 has been a particularly fertile period for poetry anthology publications in India with multiple volumes being issued from major publishing houses including Oxford, Penguin, Bloomsbury, and the Sahitya Akademi. Eunice de Souza's anthology *Early Indian Poetry in English 1829-1947* (2010) accomplishes an excellent recovery work by making available poetry of the British India days. It brings back to the readers Indian poetry in English which have been long out of print. The year 1947, the watershed year of India's Independence, is invoked again perhaps to mark the pre-modernist era in Indian writing. The poetry anthologies that followed subsequently include *The Harper Collins Book of English Poetry* (2012) edited by Sudeep Sen, *Ten: New Indian Poetry* (2012) edited by Jayanta Mahapatra, and *Scaling Heights: An Anthology of Contemporary Indian English Poetry* (2013) edited by Gopal Lahiri. They all try to announce newness in their respective ways. Sudeep Sen's anthology, for instance, includes the work of poets born only after 1950. There are conscious underlying motives in the construction of these anthologies, and subsequently, they continue to shape the identity of modern Indian poetry.

Among the many anthologies that have been published by independent presses since 2010 are titles such as *Exiled Among Native* (2013), *Suvarnarekha: An Anthology of Indian Women Poets Writing in English* (2014), *Tattooed with Taboos: An Anthology of Poetry by Three Women from Northeastern India* (2015), *40 Under 40: An Anthology of Post-Globalisation* (2016), and *Home Thoughts: Poems from British Indian Diaspora* (2017). Although topical in appearance, all of them bring to the discourse elements that were missing in the anthologies of the canonical variant. However, alongside these new peripheral titles, the race for publishing comprehensive anthologies has also been taking place. Between 2018 and 2021 Bloomsbury Publishers issued *100 Great Indian Poems* (2018), *100 More Great Indian Poems* (2019), and *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Great Indian Poems* (2020) all edited by poet Abhay Kumar. When I asked Mr Kumar during our interview (Appendix 3) if he faced any ethical concerns during the making of the Bloomsbury anthologies concerning inclusion and exclusion and the building of a canon, he simply responded: "I have no interest in building a literary canon… these are great poems for me."

What the Bloomsbury triplet anthologies share in common with Goodwin's 1927 anthology, Dharwadker and Ramanujan's *Modern Indian Poetry* (1994), and Ngangom and Kynpham's *Dancing Earth* (2009) is that they are all volumes of "transmission" (Dharwadker and Ramanujan vii). The one variable all these anthologies have in common is the medium of print – the English language. However, due to the complex web of linguistic and geopolitical constitutions of India, any anthology that participates in the construction of a national literary identity is captived when it comes to the medium of print. Rajeev Patke argues in *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2009) that poetry written in English became a necessity in a context where "national and postcolonial agendas focus on keeping multi-racial and multicultural societies on the path to modernity" (55). For that reason the English language has ironically become tied to Indian modernity as an agent of "internal unity and international globalization" (Patke 55).

This hybridity has served as a long undercurrent in the establishment of Indian poetic modernism. For a long time, spearheaded by the efforts of the Writers Workshop and the Bombay poets, poetry composed in English used to represent the idea of the new poetry, but the changing sentiments of the literary tide can be seen in the pages of anthologies as editors open up space to include translated vernacular poems because they

represent according to Dharwadker and Ramanujan, "something larger and richer in the Indian languages" (Introduction viii). For them, the task of defining modernity is always driven by a "constant curiosity about what was being written in all our Indian language" (Introduction vii). It may be argued that Dharwadkar and Ramanujan's approach is needed to make a fair assessment of the translingual and multimodal literacies that exist within India. Dharwadker also observes in his afterword that "modern Indian poems are connected to each other and to their extremely heterogeneous world" (186). It opens an interesting area of inquiry, but more importantly, it raises questions regarding the role anthologies play in the construction of this hybrid modernity in Indian poetry. The ideological intentions of anthologies are varied, and the enterprise of editing and anthologizing poetry has evolved accordingly yet remained tied to a larger national narrative. However, any attempts to understand how literary anthologies help create new *narratives* or *identities* – such as *modernity* – are never black and white because these volumes remain entangled in the dialogic web and the cultural wars of its times.

Notes

[i] *Protopapas* were head clerics of Greek Orthodox ecclesiastical office during the middle Byzantine period d

[ii] More information regarding Arthur Quiller-Couch's anthology is present in the preface to *The New Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1950* edited by Helen Gardner.

[iii] For an extensive list of various Sanskrit and Tamil anthologies refer to the International Encyclopedia of Indian Literature by Ganga Ram Garg and Encyclopedia of Indian Literature by Amaresh Datta.

[iv] Detailed history concerning *Subhashitavaliscan* be found at https://www.wisdomlib.org/sanskrit/book/2/subhashitavali

[v] For more information regarding the history of Tamil literature see M.S. Purralingam Pillai's *A Primer of Tamil Literature* (1904)