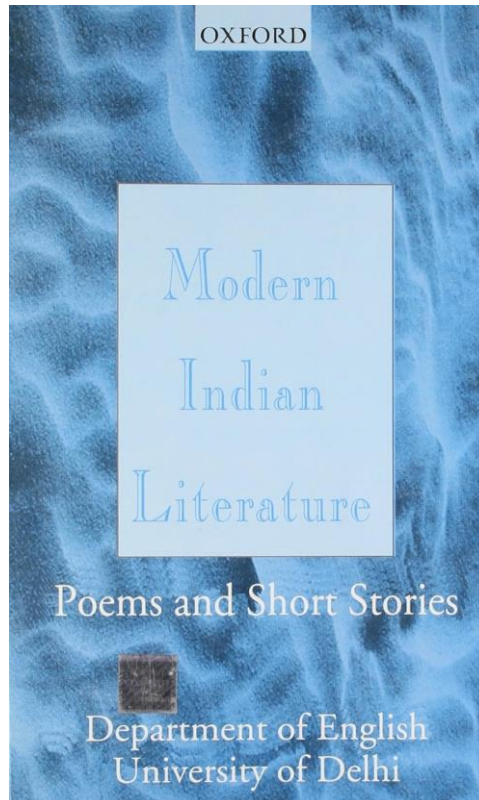


Diving into a Kaleidoscope of Emotions through Poetry: A Critical Analysis of *Modern Indian Literature*

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Abstract

The present paper showcases that how the anthology *Modern Indian Literature* undertakes the readers on an endless voyage of emotions through poetry and enables the readers to live and relive those emotions. While going through the current of such emotions, souls of the

reader's get purified unravelling the contribution of poetry towards humans making which is the topmost requirement of the present materialistic and highly ambitious world. Besides, this paper gives voice to the injustices of the past, resistance, the legacy of ancestors, bliss of rustic lifestyle, futility of adventures, helplessness, dislike for the city life and respite in the country life championing the doctrine of love, peace and harmony with human as well as natural world.

Keywords: *Modern Indian Literature*, kaleidoscope, emotions, rustic lifestyle, love, peace, harmony, natural world.

The anthology *Modern Indian Literature* contains selected poems by Jibanananda Das (1899-1954), Sri Sri (1910-83), G.M. Muktibodh (1917-64), Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004), and Jayanta Mahapatra (1928-2023).

In **Before Dying**, Jibanananda Das shares the lived experiences of his generation in the flora and fauna of nature. The poet makes use of the senses of sight, sound, and smell to express his empirical experiences like he says that it is his generation who has walked in winter dusk through the stubble fields and have seen the river women scattering the soft flowers of mist beside the fields. It is his generation who has seen the trees filled with the glow-worms, the moon standing still above the fallow fields, uncaring of the harvest yield. His generation has enjoyed the long winter nights in the village and used to identify the birds with their smell and fluttering wings even without seeing them in the darkness. The poet writes:

We who have seen the wild duck, escaping the hunter's shot

Take wing into the horizon's mild blue moonlit glow,

We who have rested our hands in love on the paddy-sheaf,

And come home like evening crows, expectantly; have found

Children's breath-scent, grass, sun, kingfisher, stars, sky-

Traces of these, again and again, the whole year round (Das 6)

The poet says that his generation has seen the leaves turning yellow or changing the seasons closely and has lived every aspect of nature that the upcoming generation cannot even imagine. Therefore, he has no dreams and desires unfulfilled before his death, the ultimate reality of life, and is satisfied with his life. Through his poem entitled **Windy Night**, Jibanananda Das shares his experiences like how he felt and what he imagined during the fierce windy night. He says that the last night was full of countless stars. He writes, "The beauties I had seen dying in Assyria, Egypt, Vidisha, / seemed to stand ranked on the faraway frontiers of the skies / among the mists, with long spears in their hands, / Was it to trample down death? / Was it to express the deep-felt triumph of life? / Was it to raise a stern fearsome tower of love?" (Das 8) Whereas, in **I Shall Return to This Bengal**, the poet feels nostalgic about Barishal, a village in Bengal where he had spent his childhood, and which became a part of Pakistan after the partition of India. He wishes to visit his native place in any form like insects, birds, or reptiles, but he wishes to refresh and relive those moments of his childhood.

Sri Sri (1910-1983) presents the enthusiasm of the revolutionaries to change the existing hierarchical world order for liberty, equality and fraternity in his poem **Forward March**. He compares the youth with the hunting animals who will hunt and destroy the centres of fraud and corruption in society. He writes:

Forward march

Oh onward surge

Ahead ahead let's always forge

Bursting like cyclonic wind

Speedier than arrows or the speed of mind

Blasting like the rainclouds' thunder

Yonder yonder yonder yonder

Lo the splendour lo the wonder

Of the burning 'Treta' light

Of another world, lo there in sight. (Sri 18)

The speaker in the poem says to the revolutionaries to keep on moving ahead like cyclonic winds, maintain their speed while shouting the slogans of their victory over orthodoxy keeping the destination vivid in their minds i.e., establishment of uprightness, a place of worth living for all the sections of society. Sri Sri's other poem **Some People Laugh, Some People Cry** unwraps a good number of moods and emotions by introducing a variety of characters while revealing the conscious and unconscious realms of their minds to the readers. The poem begins as "A man walks on the bridge and gives away the change in his pocket to a beggar/He gives away his wristwatch to a nurse who happens to walk towards him/ He throws his coat into the river and follows the coat into the water" (Sri 19). One can see that the man who attempts suicide tries to do some charity before his death. The presence of the nurse shows that he might have escaped from some hospital where he had been admitted. What happens after the jump and why he had run from the hospital where he was, remains a mystery, and arouses curiously the feelings of pity and fear in readers. Besides this, the projection of a tradesman, a man who waits for someone near a milestone if someone can arrive at any moment, a man wandering with a ladder and after climbing onto the ladder throwing an egg into the sky, a man's investigation of holes of different sizes, a man's attempts to instigate the youth for anarchy, a man's singing raga khamboji, a man's practising meditation with a string of *rudraksha* beads around his neck, a lover, a man's being hanged unjustly, a man's becoming great by making speeches, a man's becoming poor by drinking so much and a man's attempting murder of the other gives birth to numerous emotions of the readers and make their experiences sensational.

Further, in **The Void**, G.M. Muktibodh (1917-64) brings out the destructive nature of the void or emptiness inside human beings. This void inside a human being has flesh-eating teeth that can chew him/her up and everyone else. It is extremely self-absorbed, barbaric, horrible and violent. The speaker says that he passes over this void to everyone who comes across his path. He says, "The void is very durable/It is fertile/Everywhere it breeds saws, daggers, sickles/Breeds carnivorous teeth (Muktibodh 28). In his other poem **So Very Far**, Muktibodh

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says that the people who engage themselves in corruption enjoy comforts and luxuries in life whereas the men like him who prefer to earn honestly by their hard work remain unable to fulfil their basic needs even.

Thereafter, Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) presents three distinct experiences through his three narrative poems in the anthology under discussion. The poem **Enterprise** begins as a group of pilgrims undertake a journey to some holy destination with great enthusiasm and commitment to not leaving the group at any cost. As soon as the Sun starts rising into the sky, their energy level starts falling. The pilgrims make copious notes of the places and experiences they pass by. On seeing the deserted patch, one of the pilgrims who had been making notes leaves the group. Secondly, when the group is attacked twice by the wild animals in the forest, some pilgrims claim their liberty and leave the group. The leader does his best to unite the remaining pilgrims with meagre means, but after reaching they realize that their venture was neither great nor rare and come to a conclusion that "Home is where we have to earn our grace". In simple words, the poet conveys a message that we can make our lives sublime by performing our duties honestly wherever we are presently, and in this respect, we need not have special ventures. **Night of the Scorpion** brings out the cooperative and sympathetic nature of the villagers. As soon as the villagers come to know that the poet's mother has been stung by the scorpion. The numerous villagers reach there with candles and lanterns in their hands and start searching for the scorpion and when they do not find it, "They clicked their tongues/With every movement that the scorpion made/his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said/May he sit still, they said" (Ezekiel 35) More villagers come after some time with lights in their hands and try their best to decrease the pain of the mother. Finally, when the poet's mother opens her eyes, she thanks God for picking up her and sparing her children. Through the words of the mother the poet universalizes mother's love and self-sacrificing nature of mothers. Whereas through **Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.**, Ezekiel makes fun of the way Indians feel proud over the use of English whether correct or incorrect.

Furthermore, Jayanta Mahapatra (1928-2023) presents how the hunger of stomach compels an aged father to offer his fifteen-year-old daughter to a stranger in lieu of some money in his poem **Hunger**. Abject poverty, starvation, deprivation, and extreme helplessness force an

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old father who is a fisherman by profession to compromise with his ethics or values to arrange something to eat for his daughter as he had been returning empty-handed after day-long fishing in the sea for the last few weeks. The poet writes:

I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen.

Feel her. I'll be back soon, your bus leaves at nine.

The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wife.

Long and lean, her years were as cold as rubber.

She opens her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,

the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside. (Mahapatra 43)

Through **Dhauri** the poet laments over the disappearance of the warriors and soldiers who were killed in the battle of Kalinga in 261 BC as the rock edicts just mention the glory of King Ashoka and prove him the greatest, but other warriors find no mention in history even. In his other poem entitled **Grandfather**, the poet voices about the crisis his grandfather underwent due to the 1866 famine of Orissa that affected the lives of people drastically. The diary notes of the poet's grandfather speak about how he saw death because of starvation, deprivation and extreme hunger. As a result, the grandfather had two choices i.e., either to die with dignity in Hindu religion or to get converted into Christianity for the sake of life or survival. For the sake of stomach, the grandfather embraces Christianity over Hinduism as they had good grain storage for believers and new entrants. Nevertheless, Grandfather starts feeling suffocated as he misses his faith i.e., Hinduism in the core of his heart and he weeps for the same in isolation. Such an ironic situation breaks the grandfather. In addition to these, **A Country** highlights that deprivation resulting in suffering is a common phenomenon in this world irrespective of socio-political conditions. While talking about Asia, the poet says that the girls die due to malnutrition even during pregnancy. Even beautiful Naxalite girls are forced to take up weapons in their hands for their rights due to the oppressing circumstances.

Literature either portrays how life is or how it should be. Literature either entertains or appeals to bring desirable changes in society (Dev, et al. 10). Poetry has two types i.e. lyrical and narrative (Abrams and Harpham 150). All the poems in this anthology are narrative poems that are based on some event implicitly or explicitly. If lyrical poetry results from the overflow of emotions, narrative poetry results from events or incidents from the author's life generally. As the readers go through the poems included in the anthology under consideration, each poem becomes unique for originating distinctly genuine emotions.

Jibanananda Das deals with nostalgia, fear and an abundance of experiences covering every emotion through a variety sights, smells, and sounds whereas Sri Sri and G.M. Muktibodh give voice to the conscious as well as unconscious realms of mind and the intentions of revolutionaries. Nissim Ezekiel projects the situational emotional responses of the pilgrims, the caring attitude of the villagers, and the usage of English by the Indians. And Jayanta Mahapatara reveals the injustices, deprivations and helplessness of a father that compels him to bid the chastity of his young daughter. Therefore, the above poems give the readers an extremely intense, abundant, soul-stirring, and diverse experience of emotions; hence, enrich reader's experience.

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