

CHAPTER

1

1. Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In India English has been used for creative writing particularly for poetry for over 200 years. The pioneers of Indo-Anglian literature were men of education who played the role of interpreting the culture of India to west through imaginative literature. Poetry naturally came first and it was associated with the cultural Re-naissance in Bengal. Because many early and middle masters of Indian poetry came from Bengal. Thus Bengal was the birth place of Indo-English poetry. Indian poetry in English is Indian in both subject matter and style. Indian customs, belief, situations, places, superstitions etc. are reflected in Indian poetry. Early Indian poetry is consciously Indian. There are number of Indian poets who have earned name, fame and popularity by writing in English. For example the pre-Independence poets like Sarojini Naidu, Rabindrnath Tagore, Toru Dutta And some post-independence poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Ramanujan P Lal, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra, Gieve Patel, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre etc.

1.1 Indian Poetry In English :

Indian English Poetry passes through three different phases in its growth and progress. The first phase of 'imitation' begins with Henry Derozio and covers the period from 1828 to 1837. the second phase of 'protest' expresses itself in the form of national, political and cultural consciousness. In the form and style it follows the footsteps of the English romantics, but in the content and spirit it begins to established firm relations with India. As Susie Tharu says " This phase is marked by an intense sense of nationalism." (p- 59) The third phase of its own independent discipline begins with Nissim Ezekiel's *A Time To Change*

(1952). It cuts itself off its part as well as British heritage. Indian English poetry takes a new direction and begins to set up its own canons. P.C. Katoky terms these stages as 'imitation', 'Indianization' and 'individualization' in his '*Brief Survey of Indian English Poetry*' (1969:14) K.R. Srinivas Iyengar has also mentioned these three stages in his book *Indian Writing in English*. (1985)

Indian English Poetry began about one hundred and eighty years ago in 1820s. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio is the first Indian English poet. His two volumes of poetry : '*Poems*' (1827) and *The Fakir of Jungheera : A Metrical Tale and other Poems* (1828) as well as his inspiring spirit set the trend of Indian English Poetry. His poems like '*To India, My Native Land*', '*The Harp of India*', '*The Pupils of The Hindu College*' are full of patriotism. Kashiprasad Ghose published his *The Shair or Minstrel and other poems* in 1830. He imitated the love lyrics of cavalier poets and the British romantics. Michael Madhusudhan Dutta is known for his '*The Captive Ladie*' which narrates the story of a Rajput King's life. Other notable poets of the day were Kajnarain Dutta, Hur Chunder Dutta and B.M. Malbari. This phase of purely imitative poetry came to an end by 1850s.

The second phase of Indian English poetry began after the Indian struggle for freedom of 1857. This phase depicts the change in the accepted attitudes to British rulers. In this phase of 'protest' there is a growing tendency to glorify whatever is Indian. The poets plunge into India's golden past, her myths, legends, philosophy, mysticism and her tradition of vedic poetry. Though the Indian poets were constantly aware of their subordinate status, No doubt, they borrow the outward form from the British Models, but the inward contents are truly oriental.

There is a deep concern for national self-consciousness in their poetry. They explored oriental themes and as V.K. Gokak point out, the

Indo-Anglian poetry , “got out of its swaddling clothes. It was no more satellite moving around the sun of English poetry.” (1970:23). The major poets of this period from 1875 to 1952 were Toru Dutta, Manmohan Ghose, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Harindranath Chattopadhyay, Sri Arobindo Ghose and a number of minor poets.

Toru Dutta struck a new note in Indian English poetry. Her command of French and English enabled her to write freely and naturally. Her contemporary Manmohan Ghose shows a romantic strain in his poetry. Like the English romantic poetry , his poetry deals with his personal sorrow, a sense of loneliness.

Sarojini Niadu makes a conscious deal with Hindu myths and legends, Hindu attitudes and beliefs in her poetry. Her poems are the product of a good craftsmanship. She adds romantic coloring to her verse by paying more attention to Indian personality and Indian imagery. Rabindranath Tagore’s achievement as a poet rests mainly on his English ‘*Geetanjali*’ and English renderings of other poems. His poems are trans-creations of his Bengali poems.

Like Tagore , Sri Arobindo Ghose is a poet and seer. He is more spiritual philosophic and mythical than Tagore. His poetry is full of allusions to classical mythology.

The third phase i.e. modern Indian English Poetry begins with the publication of Nissim Ezekiel’s ‘*A Time To Change*’ in 1952. It marks a clear break from the preceding phase in respect of diction, style, themes and contents.

Modern Indian English poet no longer take a deep interest in self-glorification and the golden part of India. They have come out of the self imposed stance of self complacency. They have begun to see the world in the new perspective of changed circumstances. They face problems of different kind and strive hard to find out solutions. The liberation from

both the outer tyranny of the foreign rule and the inner urge of self-glorification and self-complacency have loosened their hold on their minds and art.

By the early 1960s the pioneering work of Ezekiel and others published first in the magazines –“ Illustrated weekly of India and Quest” had borne fruit in writer’s workshop , “ Volumes Of Poetry” and journal “Miscellany”. P Lal was another devoted promoter and publicist besides Ezekiel.

By the later 1960s some classic volumes of Indian English poetry were published and they established some significant poets- mainly Nissim Ezekiel, A K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das , Gieve Patel, Dom Moreas and Adil Jussawalla. Indian English poetry began to gain recognition in India as well as abroad. Very soon R. Parthasarthy, A. K. Mehrotra , Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre and Pritish Nandi came into limelight. In the next decade Keki N. Daruwala , Shiv K. Kumar, Jayant Mahapatra, Gauri Deshpande published their volumes of poetry by 1980, Manohar Shetty, Peeradina, Satan Roudrigues, Vikram Seth, Silgado attracted the attention of the literary world. In 1980s there were over 300 poets writing poetry in English. Now their number is increasing quite steadily and rapidly. This number exceeds all one poem poets. Commenting on this growth and expansion of poetry , K .R. Srinivas Iyengar says ,“This fecundity of Indian English poetry is stimulated by the vogue for the free verse i. e. apt to be as true as true.” (1985:708).

Nissim Ezekiel is the first and foremost poet of post-independence era. Modern Indian English poetry begins with his first volume of poems ‘A Time To Change’ (1952). He plays an important role in shaping the Indian recurring themes in Ezekiel are life in the city, sexuality, the problems of marriage, alienation, failure in life and search for roots. A.K. Ramanujan is another important modern poet. His two volumes of poetry

'*The Striders*' (1966) and '*Relation*' (1971) have won him much praise. Ramanujan is a willing exile in America but he always renews his contact with India.

R Parthsarthy's reputation rests mainly on '*Rough passage*' (1977). It is divided into three parts- 'Exile', 'Trial' and 'Homecoming'. It is autobiographical in nature. Gieve Patel's medical career lends his poetry a clinical detachment as well as a strong sense of compassion. Like Ezekiel he is an outsider in the Hindu society but there is no trace of rootlessness in his poetry. His second collection of poems '*How Do You Withstand Body*' (1976) deals with the unpleasant realities in life.

Keki N. Daruwalla is a police officer by profession and this fact has a great significance in understanding his response to men and events. He observes them with a trained eye and puts his experience of active life to good use in poetry. Shiv K Kumar's poetry reveals both the confessional mode as well as ironic comment. Kamala Das is known as a confessional poet. Her early poems deal with her marriage, love-life and desire for intimacy but her later poetry shows dualism in her writing in which soul is contrasted with body.

By the late 60s and early 70s experimental poetry began to appear in the Indian writing in English. The main experimentalists were Arun Kolatkar, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Pritish Nandy, Dilip Chitre and Jayant Mahapatra. All of them write poetry originally in English as well as translate poetry from regional languages into English. Bruce King observes "Their poetry reveals an awareness of most of world literature, including contemporary, American, recent South American and older Indian devotional verse in the regional languages" (1987:5)

Pritish Nandy is a prolific writer with seventeen books of exquisite poetry. He experiments with forms, metaphors, imagery and similes. Arun Kolatkar is a bilingual poet who writes in Marathi as well as in

English. He also translates his own Marathi poems into English. In '*The Boatride*' and '*Jejuri*' he changes trivialities with significance by viewing them with attention, Kolatkar uses his experience as a graphic artist and turns the dull common place reality into artistic images. The common place experience of boatride becomes an aesthetic pleasure.

Like kolatkar, Dilip Chitre is a bilingual poet. He is influenced by the great Marathi saint poet, Tukaram : his translation of Tukaram's Abhanagas '*says Tuka*' (1991) is an excellent example of translations of a great work into English. He follows modernistic techniques in order to depict the modern chaotic world. Jayant Mahapatra is closer to ended literary forms. His poetry has a unique quality of being rooted in the soil of Orissa. Mahapatra's two books of poetry '*The False Start*' (1980) and '*relationship*' (1980) have established him as a leading figure in Indian poetry.

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra is another modern poet. His poetry has general characteristic of post-modernism. In 1980, there appeared some promising poets of on the Indian literary scene. They are Satin Rodrigues, Aga Shahid Ali, Meena Alexander Saleem Peeradina and Eunice Desouza. Their poems have appeared in various journals in India and abroad. Many of these poets have also published their own separate collections of poems.

There are many modern women poets with more than one collections each to their credit. The number of minor poetic voices among the men is even greater. Almost all of them have one or two collections to their credit. At present there are over 300 poets writing poetry in English. In spite of distinct individual Indian sensibilities, these poets have always been faithful to the Indian milieu. They continue to be Indian in thought, feeling, emotion and experience.

1.2 Arun Kolatkar

It is quite obvious that Arun Balkrishna Kolatkar is a significant and well known poet in Indian writing in English. He is a gifted poet writing both in Marathi and English. He was born on 1st November 1932 at Kolhapur, Maharashtra. He had his school education at Rajaram High School, Kolhapur. Then he enrolled at the J. J. School of Art Mumbai in 1949. Afterwards he also attended art schools in Kolhapur and Pune, and completed a Diploma in painting from J. J. School in 1957. After that he completed his graduation in Fine Arts as external student from the same institution. He worked as an art director and graphic designer in many reputed advertising agencies like Lintas.

In an unpublished autobiographical essay written in 1987, he describes the house in which he spent his seventeen years.

“I grew up in a house with nine rooms that were arranged well almost like a house of cards. Five in a row on the ground, topped by three on the first and one on the second floor.”(2004:52)

Arun Kolatkar spent his early years in that house in Kolhapur a town in Maharashtra. There is a study room of his father. He found it a hidden treasure. He found white picture postcards showing the monuments and architectural marvels of Greece as well as sculptures from the various museums of Italy and France. He spent long hours spellbound by art. Thus he came from a family of artists.

Arun Kolatkar is fond of reading. He read widely. He read Indian and Western literature. History is his favourite subject. About wide reading he says “ I am particularly interested in history of all kinds the beginning of man, archaeology, histories of everything from religion to objects, bread making, paper, clothes and people.”(1999:19)

He has read the history of Islam, Christ and Hindu religion. He is interested in legends and myths of India and Greek. He is also interested

in the history of things or some objects. For example, he has collected many references and information on the object 'Paper' from 8th century. As a result he has written poems on the different objects and things in Marathi and English. His subjects are varied.

Arun Kolatkar worked in advertising for much of his life. Though he was trained at Mumbai's Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy School of art, he was nourished rather by his private engagement with literature, painting design and society. He often viewed of experience as if through a camera. The evidence of his poetry suggests that advertising may have enhanced his taste for the strange perspective. He had a magical gift for translating the familiar into the wonderful by focusing on details or tweaking our programmed approaches to objects, people and relationships. He is reclusive by nature and lives without benefit of a telephone in Mumbai. His poems have appeared in magazines and anthologies since 1955.

As a poet Kolatkar has made a major name for himself both in Marathi and English. During 1950s he was the leading light of the group of avant-garde Marathi poets that published the (short. Lived) poetry magazine 'Shabda' (word). As Dilip Chitre said "His influences on younger poets especially the rebel of Poona and Bombay is great, But he usually keeps to himself and publishes his work rarely." (1967:192)

His creative works include 'Jejuri' (1976) which received the coveted Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1977 and became an immediate hit with the reading public. Jejuri has been translated in German by C.D. Southmeir. These fine poems, all centered on a meditative tour of the temple town Jejuri. This book confirmed Kolatkar's position as one of the leading Indo-Anglian poets. His other collections of English poetry are 'Kala Ghoda Poems' and 'Sarpasatra' (2004) appeared after a gap of 25 years. About these books Pankaj Mishra said, "These last poems confirm

his cult reputation as the greatest Indian poet of his generation.”(TLS , 3rd December 2004:10)

Beside these three volumes in English, Kolatkar has contributed to Kavi, ~~Opinion~~ Literary Quarterly, An Anthology of Marathi poetry 1945-65 (Nirmala Sadanand Publishers) 1967. New writing in India (Penguin Books) 1974 and The Shell and The Rain, (George Allen and Unwin) 1973.

In Marathi he is one of the most significant modern poets, considered by some as superior to B. S. Mardhekar, the pioneer of modern poetry in Marathi. His Marathi poetry collection include 'Arun Kolatkarchya Kavita '(1977). His early Marathi poetry was radically experimental and extremely striking in theme , structure and style. His later works 'Chirimiri', 'Bhijki Vahi' and 'Droan' are less introverted. They show a greater social awareness and his satire become more direct. He won the 'Kusumagraj Puskar' given by 'Marathwada Sahitya Parishad' in 1997 and 'Bahinabai Puskar' given given by 'Bahinabai Pratishthan' in 1995. he has also won the prestigious CAG Award given in the field of advertising for six times.

Kolatkar belongs to the Marathi literary tradition. He has written much in that tradition of the Bhakti Poets notably Tukaram and Namdeo. He has done some translations of Tukaram's Abhangs. His avid reading of the saint poets and erotic poets who wrote Tamasha and Lavanis helped to formulate his general attitude.

Like A. K. Ramanujan, Kolatkar is not preoccupied with Indo-Anglian or with a tonuring awareness of a barrowed or alien tongue, About the choice of language he says “ I intend to write in both the languages. I have always been writing in both the languages. I wasn't particularly anti English or anything”(1986:57 58)

Arun Kolatkar is a bilingual poet writing in Marathi and English.

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Sometimes translating his Marathi poems into English. His poems are extremely striking in themes, structure and style also. He has unique sensibility described as neutral, serene, ironical surrealistic metaphysical and so on. He dealt with moments of experience in an urban setting Like Irani restaurant a Bombay Hospital, a boat ride off, The Gate Way Of India and experiences like death, disintegration and strongness of living things.

The most important thing about Arun Kolatkar is that he is a major experimentalist. The major Indian poets who have been experimentalists both in form and view of reality are Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Arvind Mehrotra and Jayant Mahapatra. Experimental poetry foregrounds technique, new concepts or explores uncommon experience it neglects the common world and environment or treats it in strange unconventional ways.

Arun Kolatkar makes constant experimentation with style and structure and this shows his modern and urban sensibility. He is a experimentalist both in form and the vision of reality. He goes on programming through various kinds of experimental verse. His early verse seems to be surreal, obscure and difficult for interpretation. His early Marathi poems are what he calls 'cluster bombs' densely packed with sound and metaphors. But during 1960, he changed his style from highly imaginistic and un-interpretable to anti poetic. One of the experiments in the use of language is that in some of his poems, he does not use the punctuation marks or capitalization .

For instance :

What is god
and what is stone
the dividing line
if it exists

is very thin ,
at jejuri
and every other stone
is god or his cousin (2001:28)

Irony is unavoidable part in Arun Kolatkar's poetry. His irony is woven into the very texture of his poetry. Keki Daruwala states that "The thing which strikes a reader of Kolatkar's poetry is the humour the irony implicit in his work and the way he sees the world as if reflected in a warped mirror." Ironic mode is a true modernistic quality. Irony is often used as a strategy of maintaining objectivity and neutrality of vision. As a modern Anglo Indian poet he has ironic mode. His tone is no doubt ironical but without any rejection. In 'Jejuri' many of his poems are ironical.

Arun Kolatkar is famous for his use of imagery and symbolism which are characteristics of modernity. Dr. S.K. Desai has given the description of symbolist according to John Wain. He says that symbolist is he who surrounds himself with stillness and non-event. His instrument is contemplation and power to concentrate on reality to draw scattered impressions of human mind into focus. This description of a symbolist applies to Arun Kolatkar. (1980 : 54) Kolatkar like imagists tries to present ' an unadorned object'. He presents images, objects without moralizing. The most important of them in 'Jejuri' is time. The entire sequence is framed between sunrise and sunset. The sun appearing in the poem from time to time as a significant central symbol. Even god Khandoba is associated with the sun. the other important theme is the existence of life and the variety of forms it has. The three lingas standing for Khandoba, his wife Mahalsa and his second wife Banai are symbolic of life and its variety.

Stillness is another typical characteristic of Arun Kolatkar. Keki Daruwala states that his narrative moves from still to still (1980 : 98) . This is more marked in his first long poem. *The Boatride* : It is a serious of perceptions. The well known writers like Parthasarthy, Krishnamurthi noticed stillness in Arun Kolatkar's poetry. He has been praised for the air of contemplativeness one notes in the poem. A stillness in Arun Kolatkar implies contemplation. He tries to explore the significance of external facts. He contemplates the things as they are in their reality.

Arun Kolatkar is a master of the incongruous and the absurd in reality. The imported hunting hounds indicate the amusing inappropriateness of many British influences on Indian culture. In Kolatkar's writing every cliché or idea is transformed into something new and unexpected. It is a transformation by imagination, language and tone. His realm is street talk, the colloquial, the poetry of ordinary and anonymous.

Arun Kolatkar presents the history and especially the street life of Bombay in Kala Ghoda poems . The poems focus on the triangular island opposite wayside inn. He would sit for hours at a window table, gazing out at this stony stage. The long thirty one part 'Breakfast' time at 'Kala Ghoda' at the center of the volume observes for an hour the various people, objects and actions around Flora Fountain in Bombay. He is neither sympathetic nor judgemental in his approach. He simply records their human presence makes visible the intimate aspects of their lives as an integral part of the city.

Kolatkar's later poetry become increasingly allegorical, narrative and mythical. The poetry in 'Sarpa Satra' 'Kala Ghoda poems', 'Bhijki Vahi' and 'Droan' belong to these voices. Droan is a poem in Marathi mixing myth allegory and contemporary history, employing narratives, myths, legends from all over the world, Kolatkar has evoked a women's



suffering and agony. In this collection, one comes across poems on legends from Greek, Egyptian, Arabic and South Indian cultures. 'Sarpasatra' is an English version of a poem by similar name in 'Bhijki Vahi'. The sacrifice to annihilate the Nagas or Snake people is usually allegorized morally.

Though Kolatkarr likes to write in true verse, sometimes he is very much conscious of the prosodic features of his poems. Kolatkar states that there is no influence of any established poet on his career. Talking about the use of non-Indian imagery by the Indian poets like Sadanand Rege and Dilip Chitre, he says that sometimes such a use is inevitable and it doesn't hamper the appreciation of a poem.

Replying to the comment on his irreverence in 'Jejuri' he says that there is nothing new in it, it is there in the tradition. As for as irreverence found in Tukaram it is interesting to note that irreverence as an attitude to be found in the saint poets as well. (1989:82)

Many critics have given their opinions which are helpful to understand Arun Kolatkar as a poet. Vilas Sarang says that Kolatkar's English is more effective than Marathi. He maintains that his English poetry shows much more regard for logic and reason than Marathi poetry. His English poems are made up of conscious mind but his Marathi poems based upon the resources of unconscious. According to Bijay Kumar Das, Arun Kolatkar is much more honest and true to his experiences compared to others. R.S.Kimbahune criticizes Kolatkar's tendency of non-involvement. He states that the use of foreign language as a medium of creative expression distorts some of the subtleties of nature experience. (1980-32). Keki Daruwala includes the opinion of G Whitman in his 'Two Decades'. As G Whitman observed, "Arun Kolatkar has a crystallographer's eye for the particularities of a scene". Arundhati Subramaniam said that, "what makes you trust this poet is his own ability

to trust the singular, the quotidian, the absurd, the irrelevant of the movement". Madhusudan Prasad states that " Kolatkar's poetry undoubtedly displays a happy fusion of both imagery and thought – a healthy quality of good poetry indeed." Kolatkar like Daruwala has a predominantly narrative bent which charms the reader irresistibly.

In the light of these critical comments , we may say that Arun Kolatkar is one of the significant poets writing in English. We find modern trends in Arun Kolatkar's poetry. Much more complex sensibility, irony, parody urban consciousness detailed imagery of life and experimentation are some of them. Many research works have been carried out on Arun Kolatkar's poetry, which includes M. Phil , Ph.D., dissertation, books and articles. Some of the research works on Arun Kolatkar's poetry are :

King Bruce wrote on two experimentalist Kolatkar and Chitre in *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. He highlights his experimentation in poetry in his paper. Sudesh Mishra wrote on "Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri: Quest as stasis" in *Australian and Indian literature*. M.K.Naik wrote a critical essay on Arun Kolatkar and Three Value Systems' in *contemporary Indo-English Verse' vol 2 1984*. He also wrote on "Jejuri: a Thematic Study" in '*Perspectives on Indian poetry in English*'. Bhalchandra Nemade wrote on 'Arun Kolatkar and Bilingual Poetry' in *Indian Readings in Commonwealth Literature*. Madhusudan Prasad wrote an article on 'Correspondence Through Gestures' in The poetry of Arun Kolatkar : in *Living Indian English Poets*. S.K.Desai wrote a article on "Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri:A House For God" in *The Literary Criterion*. Prashant Sinha and Shirish Chindrade wrote a article on Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri : An Athesists Pilgrimage in *New Quest 1990*. Ravindra Kumbhane wrote a article 'From Jejuri to Arun Kolatkar' in *New Quest*

1980. Shubhangi Raykar wrote an article 'Jejuri : The Cross Cultural Dimensions' in *Jejuri in a Commentary and Critical Perspectives*.

It means, many research works have been carried out on Arun Kolatkar's poetry. When we look at the works done on Arun Kolatkar's poetry we find that no work has been carried out on Arun Kolatkar's modernity. Similarly works might have been carried out on *Jejuri* only and not on other collections. But on *Jejuri* no work on modernity has been carried out . Hence the present researcher felt need to interpret Arun Kolatkar's poetry in English in the light of modernity.