

## **Course Title: Indian Poetry in English**

**Total Duration:** 40 hours

**Level:** Undergraduate

### **Course Overview:**

This course will introduce students to Indian poetry written in English, tracing its development from the early colonial period to contemporary voices. It will explore the diverse themes, styles, and forms adopted by poets and how they have reflected the cultural, social, and political landscape of India. The course will also emphasize the intersection of traditional Indian literary forms with Western influences

### **Objectives for the Course: Indian Poetry in English**

- 1. To introduce students to the evolution of Indian English poetry: Students will understand the historical and cultural context in which Indian poets wrote in English, from colonial influences to post-independence developments.**
- 2. To explore key early Indian English poets and their contributions: Students will analyze the works of early poets like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, and Rabindranath Tagore, gaining insights into their nationalist, romantic, and social reform themes.**
- 3. To examine the role of Indian English poetry in the nationalist movement: Students will study how poets like Sarojini Naidu and Aurobindo Ghose used poetry as a tool for expressing nationalistic sentiment and resistance to colonial rule.**
- 4. To analyze post-independence Indian English poetry: Students will investigate how poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, and Agha Shahid Ali reflected the changing political, social, and cultural realities of a newly independent India.**
- 5. To understand the intersection of Western literary traditions with Indian themes: The course will focus on how Indian poets have blended Western literary movements (such as Romanticism, Modernism, and Confessionalism) with traditional Indian forms and themes.**
- 6. To study the themes of identity, gender, and sexuality in contemporary Indian English poetry: Students will explore how contemporary poets such as Kamala Das and Meena Kandasamy have used poetry to challenge societal norms and address issues of gender, identity, and sexual expression.**

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## **Unit 1: Early Indian English Poetry (10 hours)**

### **Overview:**

The first unit will focus on the emergence of Indian English poetry, largely influenced by British colonialism. Students will explore the works of early Indian poets and their contributions to the development of the genre.

## Topics & Content:

1. **Introduction to Indian English Poetry** (1 hour)
  - Historical context: The impact of colonialism on literature
  - Early experimentation with English by Indian writers
2. **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** (2 hours)
  - Major works: *The Fakir of Jungheera*, *To the Pupils of the Hindu College*
  - Themes: Nationalism, romanticism, social reform
  - Influence of Romanticism and Western ideas on Derozio's writing
3. **Toru Dutt** (2 hours)
  - Major works: *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, *The Lotus*
  - Themes: Indian mythology, themes of love, death, and colonial identity
  - Dutt's place in the development of Indian English literature
4. **Rabindranath Tagore** (3 hours)
  - Major works: *Gitanjali* (English translation), *The Crescent Moon*
  - The blending of Eastern spirituality with Western literary techniques
  - Tagore's influence on Indian poetry and nationalism
5. **Sarojini Naidu and Aurobindo Ghose** (2 hours)
  - Naidu's lyrical poetry and nationalistic fervor
  - Aurobindo's spiritual and philosophical exploration through poetry

## Reading List:

- Derozio: *The Fakir of Jungheera*
  - Toru Dutt: *The Lotus*
  - Tagore: *Gitanjali* (English translations)
  - Sarojini Naidu: *In the Bazaars of Hyderabad*
  - Aurobindo Ghose: *The Rishis*
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## Unit 2: Nationalism and Romanticism (10 hours)

### Overview:

This unit will explore how poets in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used poetry to express their engagement with nationalism, romanticism, and social reform.

## Topics & Content:

1. **The Role of Poetry in Nationalism** (2 hours)
  - The role of poetry in India's struggle for independence
  - The poetic voice as a medium for political resistance
2. **Nissim Ezekiel: The Post-Colonial Voice** (2 hours)
  - Major works: *A Time to Change*, *The Unfinished Man*
  - Themes: Alienation, urban identity, post-independence disillusionment
  - Ezekiel's exploration of the Indian diaspora and identity in a changing world
3. **Kamala Das: The Confessional Voice** (3 hours)
  - Major works: *Summer in Calcutta*, *The Descendants*
  - Themes: Feminism, sexuality, emotional conflict, self-identity
  - Kamala Das's use of English as a language of rebellion
4. **Contemporary Poets of the Early 20th Century** (3 hours)
  - An exploration of poets like **Vikram Seth**, **Keki N. Daruwalla**, **Agha Shahid Ali**
  - Themes: Contemporary issues, identity, migration, and global concerns
  - The influence of Western literary movements (Modernism, Imagism, etc.)

#### **Reading List:**

- Nissim Ezekiel: *A Time to Change*
  - Kamala Das: *My Story* (autobiography excerpts)
  - Vikram Seth: *The Golden Gate*
  - Keki N. Daruwalla: *The Minister for the Interior*
  - Agha Shahid Ali: *The Half-Inch Himalayas*
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### **Unit 3: Post-Independence and Contemporary Poetry (10 hours)**

#### **Overview:**

In this unit, students will engage with poetry from the post-independence era, focusing on the changing role of the poet in the evolving Indian society. Contemporary poets from diverse backgrounds will be studied.

#### **Topics & Content:**

1. **Post-Independence Poetry and Identity** (2 hours)
  - The role of poetry in shaping post-colonial identity
  - India's cultural reinvention and the role of poetry in articulating these changes

## 2. The Modern Indian English Poets (2 hours)

- Major figures: **Agha Shahid Ali, Arundhati Subramaniam, Jeet Thayil**
- Themes: The Indian diaspora, trauma, political unrest, environmentalism
- The exploration of personal and collective memory in poetry

## 3. Gender and Postcolonial Identity (3 hours)

- The role of gender in contemporary Indian English poetry
- Focus on women poets: **Meena Kandasamy, Arundhati Subramaniam, Kamala Das**
- Themes: Feminism, body politics, gender roles, and intersectionality

## 4. The Indian Diaspora and Globalization (3 hours)

- Themes: Migration, exile, cultural hybridity
- Poets of the Indian diaspora and their contribution to the global poetry scene: **Vikram Seth, Agha Shahid Ali, Meena Kandasamy**
- Exploration of how Indian poets navigate cultural divides between East and West

### Reading List:

- Meena Kandasamy: *Ms. Militancy*
  - Agha Shahid Ali: *Call Me Ishmael Tonight*
  - Arundhati Subramaniam: *When God Is a Traveller*
  - Jeet Thayil: *These Errors Are Correct*
  - Vikram Seth: *All You Who Sleep Tonight*
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## Unit 4: Contemporary Trends and New Voices (10 hours)

### Overview:

The final unit will focus on contemporary trends in Indian English poetry, examining new voices, themes, and innovations in poetic form.

### Topics & Content:

#### 1. Poetry in the Digital Age (2 hours)

- The rise of online poetry platforms and social media's role in reshaping the Indian poetry scene
- The new generation of poets and their use of digital spaces

#### 2. The Influence of Globalization on Contemporary Indian Poetry (2 hours)

- How poets address global issues: climate change, migration, social media, and technological advancement
- Discussion of poets engaged in global dialogues: **Vikram Seth, Keki N. Daruwalla**

### 3. **Innovations in Form and Style** (3 hours)

- Exploring free verse, hybrid forms, and visual poetry
- Contemporary poets' experiments with poetic forms: **Meena Kandasamy, Imtiaz Ahmad, Jeet Thayil**

### 4. **Emerging Voices and Themes** (3 hours)

- Poets to explore: **Vikram Chandra, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Ranjit Hoskote**
- Focus on diversity, inclusivity, and marginalized voices in contemporary Indian poetry
- Themes: Social justice, caste, class struggles, identity politics

#### **Reading List:**

- Meena Kandasamy: *The Gypsy Goddess*
- Imtiaz Ahmad: *Tales of the City*
- Ranjit Hoskote: *The Long Dream of the Machine*
- Vikram Chandra: *The Painted Word*
- Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: *The Mistress of Spices*

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#### **Assessment & Evaluation:**

- **Participation & Discussion:** 20%
  - **Reading Response Papers:** 30%
  - **Midterm Exam (Unit 1 & 2):** 20%
  - **Final Exam (Unit 3 & 4):** 30%
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Absolutely! Here are the questions tailored to each unit, as requested:

#### Unit 1: Early Indian English Poetry

- MCQ 1:
  - Which of the following poets is known for blending Eastern spirituality with Western literary techniques?

- (a) Henry Louis Vivian Derozio
- (b) Rabindranath Tagore
- (c) Toru Dutt
- (d) Sarojini Naidu
- MCQ 2:
  - Toru Dutt's poetry is characterized by:
    - (a) Primarily political themes.
    - (b) Focus on urban life.
    - (c) Themes of Indian mythology and love.
    - (d) Exclusively spiritual explorations.
- One Sentence Answer 1:
  - What was a key theme in Henry Louis Vivian Derozio's poetry?
    - Nationalism and social reform.
- One Sentence Answer 2:
  - What is Sarojini Naidu known for in her poetry?
    - Lyrical poetry and nationalistic fervor.
- Essay Question 1:
  - Discuss the impact of British colonialism on the emergence and development of early Indian English poetry, using examples from the works of Derozio and Dutt.
- Essay Question 2:
  - Analyze Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to Indian English poetry, focusing on his fusion of Eastern and Western literary traditions and his influence on Indian nationalism.

## Unit 2: Nationalism and Romanticism

- MCQ 1:
  - Kamala Das's poetry is often referred to as:
    - (a) Primarily focused on political resistance.
    - (b) Devotional and spiritual.
    - (c) Confessional.
    - (d) Exclusively nature-oriented.
- MCQ 2:

- Nissim Ezekiel's poetry largely explores themes of:
  - (a) Ancient Indian history.
  - (b) Urban alienation and post-independence disillusionment.
  - (c) Rural life and folklore.
  - (d) Only spiritual enlightenment.
- One Sentence Answer 1:
  - What is a prominent theme in Nissim Ezekiel's work?
    - Alienation and urban identity.
- One Sentence Answer 2:
  - What is a reoccurring theme in Kamala Das's poetry?
    - Feminism and sexuality.
- Essay Question 1:
  - Examine the role of poetry in the Indian nationalist movement, focusing on how poets like Sarojini Naidu and others used their work as a form of political resistance.
- Essay Question 2:
  - Analyze how Kamala Das used the "confessional" mode in her poetry to challenge societal norms and explore themes of gender and sexuality.

### Unit 3: Post-Independence and Contemporary Poetry

- MCQ 1:
  - Which contemporary Indian English poet is known for exploring themes of the Indian diaspora and memory?
    - (a) Vikram Seth
    - (b) Agha Shahid Ali
    - (c) Keki N. Daruwalla
    - (d) Imtiaz Ahmad
- MCQ 2:
  - Meena Kandasamy's poetry frequently addresses:
    - (a) Classical Indian mythology.
    - (b) Traditional rural life.
    - (c) Feminism, caste, and social justice.
    - (d) Exclusively natural landscapes.

- One Sentence Answer 1:
  - What are some themes explored by poets of the Indian Diaspora?
    - Migration, exile, and cultural hybridity.
- One Sentence Answer 2:
  - What is a common theme explored by contemporary female Indian poets?
    - Feminism and body politics.
- Essay Question 1:
  - Discuss how post-independence Indian English poetry reflects the changing cultural and political landscape of India, using examples from the works of Agha Shahid Ali and Arundhati Subramaniam.
- Essay Question 2:
  - Analyze the role of gender in contemporary Indian English poetry, focusing on how poets like Meena Kandasamy and Arundhati Subramaniam address issues of identity and intersectionality.

#### Unit 4: Contemporary Trends and New Voices

- MCQ 1:
  - What effect has the digital age had on Indian poetry.
    - (a) Reduced the amount of poets.
    - (b) Increased the rise of online poetry platforms.
    - (c) Caused a return to only traditional forms.
    - (d) Had no effect on poetry.
- MCQ 2:
  - Which of the following is a trend in contemporary Indian English poetry?
    - (a) Strict adherence to classical forms.
    - (b) Avoidance of global issues.
    - (c) Experimentation with free verse and hybrid forms.
    - (d) Focus on only religious themes.
- One Sentence Answer 1:
  - What are some global issues addressed by contemporary Indian poets?
    - Climate change, migration, and technological advancement.
- One Sentence Answer 2:
  - What is a focus of contemporary Indian poetry?



- Diversity, inclusivity, and marginalized voices.
- Essay Question 1:
  - Examine the impact of globalization and the digital age on contemporary Indian English poetry, discussing how poets are addressing global issues and utilizing new platforms.
- Essay Question 2:
  - Analyze the innovations in form and style in contemporary Indian English poetry, focusing on how poets like Meena Kandasamy and Ranjit Hoskote are experimenting with poetic expression.