

# South Asian Literature



COURSE CODE : ENG-404

SEMESTER : 7TH

PROF. ZAIN UL ABIDEEN

GOVT. GRADUATE COLLEGE PATTOKI (KASUR)

Code	Subject Title	Cr. Hrs	Semester
ENG-404	South Asian Literature	3	VII
Year	Discipline		
4	English		

#### Aims:

To familiarize the students with South Asian writing and the regional flavor that it adds to literatures in English.

#### Contents:

##### Drama

Girish Karnad

Naag Mandala

##### Fiction

Kamila Shamsi

Burnt Shadows

Bapsi Sidhwa

Ice Candy Man

Mohsin Hamid

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Arundhati Roy

The God of Small Things

##### Poetry

Taufiq Rafat

The Stone Chat

Flood Wedding

Zulfiqar Ghose

Attack on Sialkot

A Dragonfly in the Sun

Nesim Ezekiel

Goodbye Party for Ms Pushpa

Maki Kureshi

The Far Thing

Christmas Letter to My Sister

Sujata Bhatt

A Different History

Genealogy

#### Recommended Readings:

1. Singh, B. P. *The State, The Arts and Beyond*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
2. Mirza, Shafqat Tanveer. *Resistance Themes in Punjabi Literature*. Lahore: Sang-e-meel, 1992.
3. Hanaway, William. Ed. *Studies in Pakistani Popular Culture*. Lahore: Lok Virsa Publishing House, 1996.
4. G. N. Devy. Ed. *Indian Literary Criticism Theory and Interpretation*. Hyderabad Press: Orient Longman, 2002.

# South Asian Literature (Selected Poems)

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## 1. Taufiq Raft

### Introduction

- Born: October 25, 1927, Sialkot
- Died: August 2, 1998, Lahore
- Pakistani author and poet, credited with introducing the concept of a "Pakistani idiom" in English literature.

### Early Life

- Born in 1927 in Sialkot.
- Influential education from Dehra Dun, Aligarh, and Lahore.
- A pioneer in English language poetry and writing in Pakistan.
- Depicted the real culture of Pakistan in his writings.
- Admired poets like Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden.
- Featured in all three of Pakistan's major anthologies.

### Major Works

- *First Voices* (1965)
- *Pieces of Eight* (1971)
- *Wordfall* (1975)
- Wrote a full-length play in verse: *The Foothold* (unpublished but performed by The Government College Dramatic Club in Lahore).
- Notable work: *Arrival of the Monsoon*.
- Translated Punjabi poet Bulleh Shah's *Puran Bhagat* (1983) and *Qadir Yar* into lyrical English.

### Contributions

- Guided, mentored, and critiqued younger poets.
- Considered a major influence on English poetry in Pakistan.

### Major Themes

- Explored themes of death, decay, and change.

### Conclusion

- The poems rich in nature and imagery.
- Simplicity and truth to human experiences characterize his work.
- Accessible to the common man.

### **1. The Stone Chat by Taufiq Rafat**

The beautiful is beautiful anyway,  
So why embellish it with words,  
The eye, too long used green  
And fruitful movement, seeking  
Subtleties where none seem to exist  
For instance, in Jhelum's eroded hills  
Where we have stopped for a moment to  
Relieve ourselves. They always remind me  
Of a village crone, too seamed and bedridden  
To be of value, yet somehow lingering on,  
Still splitting out the occasional proverb,  
Surfeit has cloyed my vision. To understand  
This waste, I must try and know myself  
As I must once have been, and become,  
And became, why even be... even  
If I have to become ... that, that stone-chat there,  
Almost lost against the no-color background.  
I would have missed him, but for his tail  
Vibrating with excitement. He hops up the slope,  
Held in place by a slab of sunlight,  
To a ridiculous terrace of wheat  
Which does not seem worth the tending.  
Once there, to burst into song. Never  
Was anything so eager to survival  
Intolerant of excuse, he calls  
This place home, has learnt to distinguish  
Between the various shades of grey  
Till the neighbourhood is a riot of color,

And ragged patch of wheat sufficient  
Cause to be mellifluous about.

## **2. *Wedding in Flood* by Taufiq Rafat**

They are taking my girl away forever,  
sobs the bride's mother, as the procession  
forms slowly to the whine of the clarinet.  
She was the shy one. How will she fare  
in that cold house, among these strangers?  
This has been a long and difficult day.  
The rain nearly ruined everything,  
but at the crucial time, when lunch was ready,  
it mercifully stopped. It is drizzling again  
as they help the bride into the palankeen (palanquin)  
This girl has been licking too many pots.  
Two sturdy lads carrying the dowry  
(a cot, a looking glass, a tin-trunk,  
beautifully painted in grey and blue)  
lead the way, followed by a foursome  
bearing the palankeen on their shoulders  
Now even the stragglers are out of view

I like the look of her hennaed hands  
gloats the bridegroom, as he glimpses  
her slim fingers gripping the palankeen's side  
If only her face matches her hands,  
and she gives me no mother-in-law problems,  
I'll forgive her the cot and the trunk  
and looking glass. Will the rain never stop?

It was my luck to get a pot licking wench.

Everything depends on the ferryman now.

It is dark in the palankeen, thinks the bride,  
and the roof is leaking. Even my feet are wet.

Not a familiar face around me  
as I peep through the curtains. I'm cold and scared.

The rain will ruin the cot, trunk and looking glass.

What sort of man is my husband?

They would hurry, but their feet are slipping,  
and there is a swollen river to cross.

They might have given a bullock at least,  
grumbles the bridegroom's father; a couple of oxen  
would have come in handy at the next ploughing.

Instead, we are landed with  
a cot, a tin trunk and a looking glass,  
all the things that she will use!

Dear God, how the rain is coming down.

The silly girl's been licking too many pots.

I did not like the look of the river  
when we crossed it this morning.

Come back before three, the ferryman said,  
or you'll not find me here. I hope  
he waits. We are late by an hour,  
or perhaps two. But whoever heard  
of a marriage party arriving on time?

The light is poor, and the paths treacherous,  
but it is the river I most of all fear.

Bridegroom and bride and parents and all,  
the ferryman waits; he knows you will come  
for there is no other way to cross,  
and a wedding party always pays extra.  
the river is rising, so quickly jump aboard  
with your cot, tin trunk, and looking glass,  
that the long homeward journey can begin.  
Who has seen such a brown and angry river  
or can find words for the way the ferry  
saws this way and that, and then disgorges  
its screaming load? The clarinet fills with water.  
Oh what a consummation is here:  
The father tossed on the horns of the waves,  
and full thirty garlands are bobbing past  
the bridegroom heaved on the heaving tide,  
and in an eddy, among the willows downstream,  
the coy bride is truly wedded at last.

## 2. Zulfikar Ghose

### Introduction

- Born: March 13, 1935, Sialkot, India (now Pakistan).
- Pakistani American author renowned for novels, poetry, and criticism on cultural alienation.

### Early Life

- Grew up as a Muslim in Sialkot and Hindu-dominated Bombay (Mumbai).
- Later relocated to England with his family.

### Education

- Graduated from Keele University (England) in 1959.
- Married Helena de la Fontaine, a Brazilian artist.
- Set six of his novels in Brazil.

### Career

- Moved to the U.S. in 1969 to teach at the University of Texas.
- Retired as a professor emeritus in 2007.
- Became a U.S. citizen in 2004.

### Major Works

- *Contradictions* (1966): Explores differences between Western and Eastern attitudes.
- *The Murder of Aziz Khan* (1967): Small farmer's struggle against developers.
- *The Incredible Brazilian trilogy* (1972-1978): Picaresque adventures.
- *A New History of Torments* (1982), *Don Bueno* (1983), *Figures of Enchantment* (1986), *The Triple Mirror of the Self* (1992), *Shakespeare's Mortal Knowledge* (1993).

### Poetry

- Poem collections include *The Loss of India* (1964), *Selected Poems* (1991), *50 Poems* (2010).
- Themes often revolve around the travels and memories of a self-aware alien.

### Major Themes

- Identity, Homeland, Diaspora, Memory, Homelessness.

### Conclusion

- Ghose utilizes powerful language in his poetry to convey profound messages.
- His works are characterized by a strong thematic foundation and compelling discourse.



## **1. The Attack on Sialkot by Zulfiqar Ghose**

Grandfather, eighty now, his pilgrimage  
to Mecca over, still lives there, at peace  
with his Muslim conscience. At our last meeting  
he sat in the courtyard of a mosque, still  
as an idol, while I stood outside, garish  
as a poster against the whitewashed wail  
in my mohair suit and corduroy hat,  
advertising my patient secularism.

Gunfire made Sialkot a kiln to fire  
Pakistan's earthen-pot faith, I listened  
to the news hour after hour the whole month  
and saw maps in newspapers~ an arrow  
pointed at Sialkot. Grandfather's breast-plate  
of Islam had become fragile as china  
in the intruding heresy of tanks.  
I see that arrow still: aimed at grandfather.

It was a messy, a child's pudding-plate  
of a town during nay first seven years.  
I pulled at grandfather's beard and dragged down  
his turban when he carried me to school.  
He turned five times a day to Mecca, bowed  
low in prayer and at night swung me round  
the bed so that my feet did not insult  
the holy direction, the one truth he knew.

From east and southeast the tanks, from the air

the jets converged all month on Sialkot  
in a massive pilgrimage, bloodier than  
the sacrifice of goats at the end of Ramadan.  
Grandfather, the landmarks are falling, which  
way will you turn now? Islam, Islam, that's  
all you cared for, stubborn as a child, while  
I had gone westward, begun to eat pork.

Grandfather, if the old house falls, if you  
die where you built and Sialkot collapses~  
I shall have no Mecca to turn to, who  
admire cathedrals for their architecture.  
I~religion is irrelevant to grief:  
you will not agree~ nor will Pakistan~  
finding in this war the old Islamic  
pride rise like a congregation in a mosque

## ***2. A Dragonfly in the Sun* by Zulfiqar Ghose**

The afternoon's light is caught  
in the dragonfly's wings where  
transparency permits no reflections  
and will not give free passage  
to the sun preserving the surface  
brightness of delicate webbing  
as fragile brilliance of gleaming  
points which make the wings nearly  
invisible and diagonal markings appear  
as tiny irradiations of very faint

pink and blue when the dragonfly  
darts up against the sun as if it  
plucked colours from the air  
and immediately discarded them:  
this is the moment of intensity,  
of the afternoon's light gathering  
in the garden in a brief flickering  
of a dragonfly's wings just above  
the red blossoms of the pomegranate.



### 3. Nissim Ezekiel

#### Introduction

- Nissim Ezekiel: Pioneer of Indian English Poetry, born in 1924, excelling as a poet, actor, playwright, editor, and art critic.
- Achieved a BA in English Literature from Wilson College, MA in English from Mumbai University, and studied Philosophy at Birkbeck College, London.
- Served as a professor and Head of English at Mithi College of Arts, Bombay.
- Edited journals like The Quest and Illustrated Weekly in India, and contributed as a broadcaster on All India Radio until his passing in 2004.

#### Awards

- Sahitya Akademi Award (1983).
- Padmashri Award (1988).
- Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel:
- Regarded poetry as "Records of mind's growth," emphasizing truth and modernizing Indian English poetry.

#### Characteristics of His Poetry

- **Urban Poet:** Presented an urban perspective, exposing societal ills with irony and satire.
- **Language:** Employed simple, economical language, prioritizing clarity and directness.
- **Wit and Irony:** Known for using wit and irony to unveil absurdities and follies.
- **Imagery and Symbolism:** Utilized effective symbols and imagery to paint vivid pictures of human life.

#### Themes of Poetry

- Explored urban life, human relationships, love, scepticism, detachment, independence, and individuality.
- Addressed Indian social issues, shedding light on poverty and superstitions.

#### Major Works

- *A Time to Change* (1952).
- *Collection of Sixty Poems* (1953).
- *The Discovery of India* (1956).
- *The Unfinished Man* (1960).
- *Hymns in the Darkness* (1976).
- *Letter-Day Psalms* (1982).

## **1. Goodbye Party For Miss Pushpa T.S. by Nissim Ezekiel**

Friends,

our dear sister

is departing for foreign

in two three days,

and

we are meeting today

to wish her bon voyage.

You are all knowing, friends,

What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa.

I don't mean only external sweetness  
but internal sweetness.

Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling  
even for no reason but simply because  
she is feeling.

Miss Pushpa is coming

from very high family.

Her father was renowned advocate

in Bulsar or Surat,

I am not remembering now which place.

Surat? Ah, yes,

once only I stayed in Surat

with family members

of my uncle's very old friend-

his wife was cooking nicely...

that was long time ago.

Coming back to Miss Pushpa

she is most popular lady

with men also and ladies also.

Whenever I asked her to do anything,

she was saying, 'Just now only

I will do it.' That is showing

good spirit. I am always

appreciating the good spirit.

Pushpa Miss is never saying no.

Whatever I or anybody is asking

she is always saying yes,

and today she is going

to improve her prospect

and we are wishing her bon voyage.

Now I ask other speakers to speak

and afterwards Miss Pushpa

will do summing up.

## 4. Maki Kureishi

### **Background**

- Maki Kureishi, the first Pakistani female English poet.
- Featured in The Times Magazine's top 50 writers since 1945 in 2008.
- Born in Calcutta in 1927, moved to Karachi after the partition of the sub-continent.
- Mother from Germany; father, a professor in a German university.

### **Career and Personal Life**

- Became an associate professor of English at Karachi University.
- Married a Muslim professor at the same university.
- Belonged to the Parsi religion, originating from Iran.

### **Parsi Culture**

- Parsis dispersed to India, Pakistan, etc., adopting local cultures and festivals.
- Open-minded and liberal, adapting to the society where they lived.
- Cultural impact: Persians in India influenced by Hinduism, in Pakistan by Muslim culture.

### **Identity Crises**

- Maki faced identity crises due to her Parsi background and marriage to a Muslim professor.

### **Christmas Celebration**

- Despite no religious connection between Persians and Christmas, Maki celebrated the festival annually.
- Cultural adaptation: Embracing worldwide festivals and adopting societal cultures.

### **Challenges**

- Maki, a polio patient, faced difficulties in walking and traveling.
- Spent most of her time in one place, reflecting on her past through poetry.

### **Poetry Theme**

- Both poems in the outline are based on Maki's memories, reflecting her experiences and challenges.

## **1. *The Far Thing* by Maki Kureshi**

A pine cone. Wide open. Brought  
From a northern holiday  
To show my child. After a decade  
In my drawer. I should throw it away

I suppose a wood-sculptured flower  
The final corolla guards stamens  
Still intact. It will grow in rain.  
And a white air. Here in the desert's  
Perpetual weather, it gestates a towering  
Conifer that will not happen.

The carved petals, crown on crown  
Are lifted to no visible sun.

I put back. It has like the Bronze  
Charioteer, a readiness  
For the far thing. Monolithic as  
A mountain pine, his wide gaze unfocused.  
He waits at the beginning. Although the horses  
Have bolted and the chariot was dust  
Three thousand years ago,  
He keeps a gambler's faith in his change of luck.



## **2. Christmas Letter to my Sister by Maki Kureshi**

Each year I decorate a Christmas tree,  
With trinkets from Bohri Bazar, Germany, Japan.

You'll send home more from China,  
And Korea to please my daughter

Each year I hang the glitter  
Of our childhood up again

Mother kept our own traw secret  
Until Christmas Eve, when, doors thrown wide,

It startled us—a dour  
Cypress from the garden, now enchanted.

Bearing its fragile globes and stars  
Like Goblin fruit, I use

A less dramatic Casurina pine,  
As you plant spices in Cologne but though,

Your backyard's fertile as a flower pot  
They'll not grow native, yet are native.

To the private landscape where we lived  
Alien and homegrown. Often

As a Christmas treat Raja sent  
His official elephant. We were shipwrecked on

When the haunches rose like a tidal wave  
We learned to brace and sway. Still practised in equipoise

I teeter and braced to my uncertainties.  
Survive, Anglo-Indian as a dark bungalow.

You, among buildings that cut down  
Our elephant to size, play house\_\_\_never at home.

Always the long repeated journeys looking for  
Something you have left behind.

When we meet, all the doors swing open,  
For this is where you live, but the rooms

Are empty, echo to our timid  
Grown up voices and this old child

Who lifts a broken-toy face is she,  
You or me? Only our scars mark where we built,

Our personal and nursery planet,  
Still we've kept the knack. I middle-aged fidget,

With make-believe; you home sick and not  
Eager to come home, are foreign everywhere, Live European.

Stay haunted by the image of

That makeshift geography we share.

So come December, I wish you peace,

With faith in make-believe; and deck my sunny tree

With blobs of cotton wood. Perhaps you stand

Before a frozen pane, indifferent to carols,

Snow, your fir-tree, watching that large ghost,

Our elephant, lumbering by.

## 5. Sujata Bhatt

### Introduction

- Indian English poet born on May 6, 1956, in Ahmedabad.
- Holds an MFA degree from the University of Iowa, serving as a writer-in-residence at the University of Victoria.
- Renowned for her poetry, with accolades such as the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1988.
- Other awards include the Alice Hunt Bartlett Prize in 1977, the Cholmondeley Award in 1991, and the Italian Tratly Poetry Prize in 2000.

### Poetry and Style of Sujata Bhatt

- Gujarati is her mother tongue, and she combines it with English in her Indian-English poetry.
- Translates Gujarati poetry into English.
- Utilizes free verse with a fast-moving, urgent narrative style.
- Incorporates linguistic variations and multilingual mixings due to her tri-cultural background.
- Consciously integrates Eastern and Western cultural elements in her poetry.

### Themes in Sujata Bhatt's Poetry

- Explores interpersonal and intercultural relations, feminism, patriotism, colonialism, and cultural aspects.
- Major works include six poetry collections: "Brunizem" (1988), "Monkey Shadows" (1991), "The Stinking Rose" (1995), "Pure Lizard" (2008), "Point No Point," and "Augator."

### 1. *A Different History* by Sujata Bhatt

Great Pan is not dead;

he simply emigrated

to India.

Here, the gods roam freely,

disguised as snakes or monkeys;

every tree is sacred

and it is a sin

to be rude to a book.

It is a sin to shove a book aside

with your foot,

a sin to slam books down

hard on a table,

a sin to toss one carelessly

across a room.

You must learn how to turn the pages gently

without disturbing Sarasvati,

without offending the tree

from whose wood the paper was made.

Which language

has not been the oppressor's tongue?

Which language

truly meant to murder someone?

And how does it happen

that after the torture,

after the soul has been cropped

with the long scythe swooping out

of the conqueror's face –

the unborn grandchildren  
grow to love that strange language.

## 2. *Genealogy* by Sujata Bhatt

My daughter  
when she was four  
once described herself as a tiny  
egg  
so small, she was inside me  
at a time when I was still not  
born  
when I was still within her  
grandmother.  
And so, she concluded  
triumphantly,  
I was also inside Aaji.

When she showed me  
her newest painting, she said:

At night the sun is black  
and the moon turns yellow.

(...)

This is the sky at night  
so the sun is also black

What are the angles doing at night?

(...)

Ill be happy to be angel.

Later, I overheard her say to

Her father:

When I am a grandmother

I'll be very old

and you'll be dead.

But I hope you've learned

to fly by that time

because then you can

fly to my house

and watch me with my

grandchildren