Interestingly, Tagore entered very late into the canons of Indian Poetry in English. Most anthologies neglected him. The inclusive ones rejected him because they were unsure about his position. They selected poets who wrote mainly in English. Tagore wrote poetry mainly in Bengali and, only incidentally, in English and that too as prose trans-creations of his Bengali poems and songs. The exclusive anthologies rejected him on this ground and also because his poetry was archaic in language, mystical and otherworldly in content, to these editor poets. This was part of the Modernist rejection and break in the Western canon from the 1920s until the 1940s.

Ironically, it was a much later realization, that the poet who was not considered part of the canon happened to be the poet whose *Gitanjali* (at the poet’s own insistence) was given the status of an original work in English and also the highest and the most popular acclaim that any poetic work in English by an Indian poet ever received or has received until now. It is exactly at this point that some serious reflection is required both on the text of the English *Gitanjali* as well as the political forces that go into the creation of the canons of Indian Poetry in English.

I feel that even the anthologies that included Tagore’s English poems did so rather out of recognition of a neglected giant, who could not be neglected anymore and would have to be given a proper place in the museum. The anthologies that excluded him wished away a rich traditional heritage in their haste to subscribe to the Modernist and postmodernist bandwagon. The Bengali literary canon did not even concern itself with these problems. Why should it? *Gitanjali*, after all,
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for the Bengalis, is a work in their language, Bangla. The true legacy of the English Gitanjali for Indian Poetry in English still needs to be evaluated. I feel Indian Poetry in English would have been richer and vaster (in its readership) if the Modernists driven-by-haste had only genuinely evaluated this legacy. I will try to reach into the depths of this legacy to analyse what lessons were lost to Modernist and postmodernist Poetry in English in India. Maybe we will realize why this poetry has lost its truest identity and its sense of continuity with its deepest roots.

Indian Poetry in English, unfortunately, has always been seen as an offshoot of the history of English Poetry in the wider global context. Alternately, it has made inroads into postcolonial historiography. It is important to be a part of all this, but in this way poetry in English in India can only acquire the status of a second-class citizen, if not a tertiary status. The critical parameters in all these contexts have been to fit it into a vaster canon and give it a limited and peripheral position. We face a serious problem when we try to work out a genuine historiography for Indian Poetry in English in our own terms without this constant reference to a wider historiography of a poetry which is not our own. G.N. Devy (who, again, misses out on Tagore, except for a mention of his name, casually,) in his essay on the historiography of Indian Poetry in English, nevertheless, puts this problem in a nutshell: “if literary history is a search for continuity in a given literature, what kind of continuity can the historian find in Indian Poetry in English where there is no obvious tradition in the accepted sense of the term.”

With no geographical linguistic base (as Bengali poetry in Bengal or Marathi poetry in Maharashtra), untouched by the problems of rural, backward, real India (like the regional literatures are with the Dalit and Gramin movements), is Indian Poetry in English to be limited to the confines of urban life and drift about in a state of rootless alienation? Alienation seems to be the only major motif, the one continuing dialectic process between the grassroots of Indian culture and the urge to come to terms with mainstream urban life.

Thus, Devy, ironically sees the history of Indian Poetry in English (as recorded by several poet-editors in their anthologies driven by personal preference) as an ongoing tale of “culture conflict” that a

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