

ATLANTA REVIEW

Dan Veach, Editor & Publisher

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INDIA

Edited by

Bhisham Bherwani

Atlanta Review's **INDIA** anthology (April 2012; \$8.00; paperback) of modern and contemporary poetry in English from India is the first US publication of its kind. The selection spans over sixty years of poetry in English by resident Indian poets, tracing the growing tradition of verse in English in India from the mid-twentieth century to the present.

Included are poets with international reputations (Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Dom Moraes, and A. K. Ramanujan) and poets perhaps never before encountered by American readers. In tones ranging from earnest to flippant, from ironic to irreverent, from aggrieved and sardonic, the poets collectively recreate the complex and cosmopolitan India in which they live and practice their craft. Nissim Ezekiel, the father of modern Indian poetry in English, writes in "Background, Casually,"

I went to Roman Catholic School,
A mugging Jew among the wolves.
They told me I had killed the Christ,
That year I won the Scripture Prize.
A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears.

The anthology also includes modern translations from six languages, of poems often revived from the past, which embody the enduring subjects of erotic love, divine love, and mortality. In Mehrotra's translation from the Prākṛit of one of the earliest extant anthologies of Indian poetry (*Gāthāsaptasatī*, circa second century A.D.), in verse #169, "Day's work done, / The sad harvestman / Idles in the field, / Avoids returning / To a widowed hearth"; and in verse #664, "After much training, / The hussy's mongrel / Licks her lover's hand / And flies at her husband."

"Bhisham Bherwani's brilliant anthology of Indian poetry in English," observes poet Ilya Kaminsky, "opens many doors to our understanding of poetics that are both luminous and sensual. Including the work of classic poets, such as A. K. Ramanujan, and many new voices, this collection acts as an important 'registry of tree-rings, / suddenly younger / than all their timely descendants...' (Ramanujan). This is a book of wisdom, but the wisdom is worn lightly, with music and wit, with fury and compassion. "

"Bherwani," notes Edward Hirsch, "shows keen judgment in bringing us this deep and wide-ranging selection of modern and contemporary Indian poems in English. What a treasure!"

About Bhisham Bherwani

Bhisham Bherwani is the author of the poetry volume *The Second Night of the Spirit* (CavanKerry Press). He lives in New York City, where he teaches creative writing and literature.

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