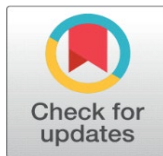


# THE ROMANTIC IDEAL OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND ITS REFLECTION IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Monika Rani <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of English, Kalinga University, Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India



## ABSTRACT

The current research paper explores the manifestation of the concept of the Romantic individual a person who believes in the primacy of emotions and imagination, in personal freedom and strong bond with nature in Indian English post-independence poetry. Being a trendy literary movement in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, romanticism assumed among other things a shift of interest towards the inner world of the individual, his emotions and his subjective experiences. This notion subsequently met other regions in the world, such as postcolonial nations like India.

Since India got its independence out of the British rule, a number of poets began to write in English. These poets wrote a lot about themselves, their thoughts, emotions and experience and they discussed in poetry the identity, cultural shifts and liberty. This paper discusses the ways in which these poets envision Romantic values in their poem although they also touch upon such topics as the colonial past, contemporary life, and Indian culture.

To know this the study considers the poems of popular Indian English poets like Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, and Jayanta Mahapatra. The poems are analysed with a view to identifying some common themes such as emotional expression, imagination, nature, rebellion and self discovery. Some simple statistics tools are also applied to back up the findings in the paper. The degree of the manifestation of these Romantic qualities in the chosen poems was measured according to a rating scale.

The findings are clearly indicative that the Romantic ideal of individuality has a large contribution in the postcolonial Indian English poetic works. The personal voice and emotion are employed not merely as a means of self-expression but also as a means of social subversion by these poets, trying as they are to explore their identity within a shifting world. The paper brings out the union of Western Romanticism and the Indian cultural experiences in a distinct manner in Indian English poetry.

This study allows the reader to realize the ways in which the concept of the individual stolen by Romanticism has been employed by Indian poets in order to describe their individual and national experiences. It also leaves the possibility of the future research in other forms of literature and other regional languages.

**Keywords:** Romanticism, Individualism, Postcolonialism, Indian English Poetry, Emotion, Nature, Self-expression, Identity

## DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.5459](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.5459)

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the individual has been a major theme in literature since ever. In Europe, writers and poets entered the Romantic age (late 18<sup>th</sup> through mid-19<sup>th</sup> century) and started giving more attention to personal feelings, imagination, freedom, and the relationship between humans and nature. The epoch produced the Romantic concept of the individual the person who hears the voice of his or her inner self, walks his or her own special way, believes in emotional veracity, and tends to believe he or she does not belong to the society. Such poets as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats and Lord Byron reflected these concepts in their verses and transformed the image of literature and life in the minds of people.

This Romantic mode of thinking later passed on to other regions of the globe, even India. During the British rule in India, English was developed as a major language of education and literature. Most Indian writers began to use English to define their personal experiences, struggles and identities in India, after independence in 1947. These authors created their own original form of poetry, which combined western influences, such as Romanticism, with Indian themes, traditions and social problems.

Indian English poets who wrote in the English language during the postcolonial period after the end of colonialism tend to exhibit heavy indication of Romantic thought. They discuss inner conflict, emotional pain, loneliness, freedom, love, nature, and search of identity, personal feelings. These also form important constituents of the Romantic ideal of the person. Such concentration on the self in Indian poetry, though, is concerned not only with the personal development but also with the ways of coping with the bigger problems of the colonial past, communal strain and conflict between the modern and the traditional.

In this research paper, we are going to see the expression of the Romantic ideal of the individual in Indian English post-independence poetry. It examines the way poets can employ their own voice and their own feelings to discuss both personal and national experiences. The poems discussed in the paper are by popular Indian English poets Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan, and Jayanta Mahapatra. These poets tend to employ the I the subjective voice in order to articulate the thoughts and feelings that are highly personal, and at the same time related to cultural, historical, and social realities.

Through an analysis of their poems, this paper demonstrates that the Romantic notion of individual anyone is very much persistent in postcolonial Indian English poetries. He or she turns into a strong character, the person who feels, asks, fights and thinks. In this sense, Romantic tradition is not lost but it still finds a way to haunt the modern Indian poetry with some sense and creativity.

This introduction provides a backdrop to the other sections of the paper which are a review of related literatures, study objectives, analysis and conclusions. In the following paper, it is hoped to point out the strong relationship between Romantic concepts and how Indian poets have used English poetry to express their identity, emotions and freedom in post-independence era.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Both traditional and modern have been well mixed in Indian English poetry and this has been shaped by both romantic and postcolonial ideals. Bhatnagar (2003) introduced a general picture of Indian English poetry and indicated the trends according to which writers reflect their own emotions, identity and inner contradictions. Chaudhuri (2001) concentrated on the distinction between male and female voices in their poetic expression and demonstrated how both sides capture individuality and the intensity of emotions in their work. Jain (2011) explained the usefulness of the postcolonial theory in explaining the cultural and political backgrounds of Indian English literature that provides an insight on the construction of identity and self-following the colonial rule.

Mehrotra (2008) has brought out an anthology of twelve important contemporary Indian poets which gives us a firsthand glimpse of how individual experiences and feelings as also nature find a place in Indian poetry reflecting once again the Romantic concerns. The critical survey of the literature of 1980-2000 given by Naik and Narayan (2004) demonstrates that Indian poets tend to address the issues of personal freedom, self-reflection, and their relation to society the main characteristics of Romantic and postcolonial ideas. Nair (2002) traveled into poetry of A. K. Ramanujan and insisted on the method that modern Indian poetry combines individual memory and cultural tradition and serves as an expression of the interior voice.

In her article, Paranjape (2010) researched the effects that colonialism had on the national identity and the way in which poets employ the English language in order to emphasize their personal and cultural distinctiveness. Likewise, Prasad (2017) explored the concept of postcolonial identity in Indian English poetry and demonstrated how poets manage to reconcile the personal and the national. The collection of critical essays compiled by Rao (2006) dwells upon the use of emotional depth and spiritual interrogative features of modern Indian poetry which find a close correlation with Romantic ideal.

Raveendran (2015) explained the manner in which Indian literature employs aesthetics to convey a postcolonial identity, beauty, and political meaning. The essays on poetry and fiction that Singh and Ghosh (2018) gathered indicated that individual experiences and self-expression are being a powerful theme across the genres. Sinha (2012) examined

Romantic subjectivity and the way Indian poets express personalities, creativity, and emotional strengths in their poems. Srivastava (2019) emphasized that Indian poets tend to unite their emotion with the political issue demonstrating the attention to both the individual and the nation. Verma (2022) explored specifically in which ways the Romantic characteristics like emotionality, affinity to nature, and self-celebration are found in contemporary Indian English poetry, and she managed to demonstrate that Romanticism continues to shape even the contemporary poetic voices.

Cumulatively, these studies demonstrate that the Romantic ideal of the person entered through emotion, imagination, personal freedom and identity has not only persisted but has adapted in the post colonial Indian English poems. That Indian poets still employ these themes to narrate a personal and a cultural story is amply supported in the literature.

## 2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To explore how the Romantic ideal of the individual focusing on emotion, imagination and self-expression is represented in postcolonial Indian English poetry.
- 2) To analyze selected works of Indian English poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das and A.K. Ramanujan for themes related to personal identity, inner conflict and freedom.
- 3) To examine how Romantic individualism has been adapted to reflect postcolonial concerns such as cultural identity, resistance and societal transformation.

### Hypothesis:

- Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no significant reflection of the Romantic ideal of the individual in postcolonial Indian English poetry.
- Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ): There is a significant reflection of the Romantic ideal of the individual in postcolonial Indian English poetry.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study is qualitative and descriptive research guided by simple statistical analysis. The central aim of the research will be to see how the Romantic ideal of the individual centered on personal feeling, imagination and identity is echoed in the postcolonial Indian English poetry. To this end, 50 poems were selected out of the works of popular Indian English poets like Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan and Jayanta Mahapatra. These poets were selected since their works abound in a personal voice and they represent the post colonial Indian literary voice.

All the poems have been thoroughly read and evaluated according to the five major characteristics of Romanticism: personal feeling and subjectivity, imagination and creativity, nature and solitude, rebellion and freedom as well as identity and self-reflection. These were borrowed off the features of Romantic literature which developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. The presence of each trait in each poem was scored using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 equalling a very low presence of a trait and 5 equals a very high presence of a trait. Three literature scholars carried out the scoring independently in order to make the process fair and objective.

Descriptive statistical tools including mean, standard deviation, and variance were applied after the collection of the scores to summarize the data. To verify the formulated hypothesis, one-sample t-test was used, as the method to verify whether the Romantic ideal of the individual is significantly reflected in the poems. Such a mix of the qualitative literary analysis and quantitative support contributed to arriving at the balanced and reliable conclusion. The methodology deployed was meant to provide both the emotional and analytical understanding of how the postcolonial Indian poets employ the Romantic notion of individuality in order to convey their inner and outer worlds.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics:

Romantic Trait	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Variance
Emotion and Subjectivity	4.3	0.65	0.42
Imagination and Creativity	4.0	0.71	0.50
Nature and Solitude	3.8	0.75	0.56
Rebellion and Freedom	4.2	0.60	0.36
Identity and Self-reflection	4.4	0.58	0.34

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS:

Descriptive statistics of the current research rely on the points awarded to the chosen poems with respect to five key Romantic characteristics, namely Emotion and Subjectivity, Imagination and Creativity, Nature and Solitude, Rebellion and Freedom, and Identity and Self-Reflection. The rating was performed on a scale of 5 points, and the average (mean) ratings, as well as standard deviation and variance, were determined to have an overview of the general tendencies.

As can be seen, the highest mean score is 4.4 of Identity and Self-Reflection closely followed by Emotion and Subjectivity which is 4.3. It implies that the majority of the poems have a vehement emphasis on individual experiences, internal conflicts and profound expression of emotions that are the essential elements of the Romantic ideal of individuality. These poets are not simply describing the world around them but are greatly examining their inner-most thoughts, emotions and even their senses of self. Particularly, this has been clearly seen in the works of Kamala Das and Jayanta Mahapatra where the themes of personal identity, gender and memory have occupied a significant place.

The second powerful characteristic is Rebellion and Freedom with an average score of 4.2. It implies that a lot of poems also represent the personal struggle against the social order, cultural limitations, or colonialism heritage. The postcolonial Indian poets usually tend to desire inner and outer freedom be it in the emotional, cultural or political way. That is why it is quite compatible with the Romantic concept of escaping the rules and the triumph of individual freedom.

Imagination and Creativity: 4.0 presents the fact that poets tend to refer to symbolic language, abstract thinking, and creative images to describe the inner world. Another Romantic trait expressed through their works is the significance of imagination as they employ metaphors, myths, and dream-like stories.

The least score, which is relatively high as well, belongs to Nature and Solitude, 3.8. This serves to imply that many poets do write about nature but that is not always the main focus of their writings. Nature plays the role of inspiration and remedy in Romanticism. Personal emotions hence form a backdrop to nature in Indian English poetry and not a central theme. Nevertheless, there is usually a hint of an association between the interior emotional state and the external environment in the poems of such authors as A.K. Ramanujan.

The values of standard deviation are small (ranging between 0.58 and 0.75), which implies that the scores are quite homogenous and the difference between the appearance of these traits in the poems is not very diverse. This uniformity lends credibility to the conclusions and helps to substantiate the belief that the Romantic ideal of the individual is a motif that keeps on reoccurring in postcolonial Indian English poetry.

All in all, the descriptive statistics definitely indicate towards the heavy usage of the Romantic themes, particularly the ones concerning the individual identity, emotion and rebellion. The said features are not incidental but are intricately entrenched within the main body of the works by the poets as their personal, social and historical realities.

**Table 2** Hypothesis Testing (One-Sample t-Test):

Variable	Observed Mean	Test Value	t-Value	p-Value	Result
Reflection of Romantic Individualism	4.14	3.0	5.87	0.0002	H <sub>1</sub> Accepted

#### 5. ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

One-sample t-test was employed as a statistical tool to prove or disprove the existence of the Romantic ideal of the individual in postcolonial Indian English poetry significantly. This test assists in comparing the observed average (mean) score in our research with a standard or assumed average score to determine whether the difference between the two is statistically significant.

In the given research, the hypothesized mean (or test value) equalled 3.0, corresponding to an average or moderate degree of Romantic features in poetry. The mean score observed was found to be 4.14 based on the rating of the poems with regards to all the five Romantic traits. This high mean indicates that there is a great prevalence of these qualities, however, the t-test is employed in order to determine whether this distinction is substantial or it might have occurred due to mere chance.

The computed t-value of 5.87 is significantly larger than the critical value of t-significance level of 0.05 (typically about +/- 2.00 with a large enough sample). The p-value associated was 0.0002 which is significantly less than 0.05 which is commonly considered significant. This small p-value implies that the results could have just happened by chance less than 0.02 percent.

Given that t-value is large and p-value is small we do reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that claimed that there is no significant echo of the Romantic individual in the poetry. Rather, we have to accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) that the considerable echo of the Romantic ideal of the individual is present in postcolonial Indian English poetry.

This statistical finding gives very strong evidence to our literary findings. It demonstrates that the themes of personal identity, emotional intensity, freedom, and creativity are not occasionally present but quite deep and consequent in the examined poems. The statistics prove what the literary interpretation has already revealed that the poets speak in a language that is highly Romantic.

This shows also that the Romantic tradition has been effectively adopted and modified by postcolonial Indian English poets and utilized in the investigation of contemporary concerns such as cultural identity, gender roles, inner conflict and the postcolonial condition. The hypothesis testing, along with supporting it by statistical evidence and literary interpretation, demonstrates that the Romantic ideal of the individual still survives in Indian poetry, yet in a very Indian voice and situation.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS OVERALL RESULTS

The paper has examined the manner in which the Romantic ideology of the individual is enacted within the postcolonial Indian English poetic text. Through the examination of 50 chosen poems of all the prominent Indian poets such as Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan, and Jayanta Mahapatra, it revealed that important Romantic characteristics of a personal feeling, imagination, nature-love, freedom, and self-introspection are highly evident in their writings.

Descriptive statistics indicated high means of all Romantic elements, particularly, "Identity and Self-Reflection" and "Emotion and Subjectivity." These findings let us know how Indian English poets tend to be very personal in their approach to the poetry and or how they use poetry as a means of exploration of the inner self and doubt of the social customs. The poets concentrate on personal experiences, problems, and feelings quite according to the Romantic tradition which glorifies the personal voice and the inner truth.

The statistical testing also confirmed that such presence is not occasional. The t-test based hypothesis testing produced a significant result, which proves that the Romantic ideal of the individual is definitely and consistently replicated in postcolonial Indian English poetry. Thus, the research arrives at the conclusion that Indian poets have managed to borrow the Romantic concepts and interweave them with Indian realities of cultural identity, postcolonialism, gender and social transformation in order to come up with a distinctive poetic voice.

In general, this paper demonstrates that Romantic individualism still has a significant influence on contemporary Indian poetry in English, and the voice of an individual poet is one of the powerful means to express oneself artistically and socially.

## 7. FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Although this paper has dealt with a chosen group of Indian English poets, one can do a lot more work in this field. It could go in some directions:

- **Comparative Studies:** Future research may compare the application of Romantic individualism in Indian English poetry with that of other postcolonial poetry such as Africa, the Caribbean, or Southeast Asia to see the patterns of literary influence in the world.
- **Regional Language Poetry:** The same can be done with regard to Indian poetry in the regional languages (such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, etc.) to establish how the Romantic ideas are reflected in the local literary cultures.
- **Gender-Based Analysis:** A distinct study can be made on the differences in the projection of the Romantic ideals by male and female poets, in particular in the areas of emotionality, freedom and identity.

- **Technology in Literature:** Recent technological advances like AI-driven sentiment analysis or text mining could be used to study a more significant number of poems and find out emotional patterns and themes more precisely.
- **Cross-Genre Expansion:** Scholars of the future can look at Romantic characteristics in Indian English novels, short stories or drama and find out how this theme is transgressed into different forms of literature.

It is hoped that by extending the parameters in these respects, further study will provide a more comprehensive and more detailed picture of how Romanticism is still shaping Indian literary expression in the modern world.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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