

Reimagining the Human: A Critical Posthumanist Reading of Indian English Poetry

Abstract:

This dissertation begins with a quiet rupture felt across contemporary Indian English Poetry, a growing sense that the category of the “human” is no longer able to contain the multiplicity of lives, forces, and histories that press upon it. In attending to this rupture, the study turns to critical posthumanism as a way of tracing how poets in India imagine the human otherwise: as a being shaped by its continual negotiations with the animal, the ecological, the technological, the spectral, and the ancestral. The poets considered here write from within the layered textures of Indian life and identity shaped by caste, class, fragile ecologies, myths, and accelerating technology. In their work, the human often appears as a shifting silhouette: sometimes diminished, sometimes porous, sometimes unexpectedly reconstituted in relation to rivers, monsoons, interspecies kinship, or histories of violence. These poems suggest that the human is less a fixed identity than a provisional arrangement of forces always already entangled with the more-than-human. Drawing from the diverse strands of critical posthumanism, decolonial thought, feminism, and cultural studies, this dissertation reads Indian English Poetry as a field where global theoretical debates acquire new tonalities. The poets do not merely rehearse posthumanist concepts; they refract them through the specificities of Indian cosmologies, socio-political identities, and everyday negotiations. Their poems unsettle the neat boundaries that humanism once secured, and in doing so, offer alternative concepts and vocabularies for imagining peaceful coexistence. Thus, the dissertation suggests that Indian English Poetry does more than merely echo the global posthumanist turn; it expands its ethical and imaginative horizon. These poems, with their careful attention to relation, vulnerability, and the unseen infrastructures of existence, offer a distinctively Indian rethinking of what it means to share a common world. They remind us that moving beyond the human is not an erasure but an opening, a true chance to understand the human as emergent, interdependent, and inseparable from the wider mesh of life that sustains it.

Keywords: Critical Posthumanism, Indian English Poetry, Identity, Caste, More-than-Human