



Indira Junghare

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*Hey, World of Imagination,
Accept me as a woman of liberation
With no complications
With no distractions*

*I shall do what I please
For I am free as a gentle breeze
I shall do what I wish
I shall stand on the mountain peak. . .*

— “A Free Woman” in The Poetry Pond

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Quick Facts

- * Born in 1940
- * Indian-American poet and scholar
- * Published *The Poetry Pond* in 1999

Biography

In the village of Nehri in the state of Maharashtra, India, Indira Junghare began her schooling. Battling the social restrictions placed on a woman’s education, Junghare traveled to a neighboring village after only two years of initial education in Neri. In Buldhana, the district town, she went against the odds and completed her high school education and one year of college. Still following her quest for knowledge, Junghare moved to Nagpur to graduate with a B.A. in both Philosophy and Home Economics.

Junghare continued to place education as one of her top priorities even after her marriage to Yashwant N. Junghare in 1962. At a time when the majority of Indian women, especially village women, took on the role of a housewife after marriage, Junghare followed her husband to the United States and continued studying at Penn State.

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Indira Junghare

Biography continued

Joining the Peace Corps, she taught first in California and then in Texas. It was in Texas where Junghare's career found its roots. Studying with Edgar Palome, a professor of South Asian and African Studies at the University of Texas, Junghare managed a difficult balance between an assistantship in Linguistics and being separated from her husband. At the time, Junghare's husband, Yashwant, was finishing graduate work at Texas A&M. Recalling the difficulties with the distance, Junghare stated, "It was hard for us. I would see him once a week and would cook Indian food for him and leave packets of food that he could freeze and eat when I was gone. We did this for five years, but we both understood what the freedom associated with an education meant."

In 1971 Junghare completed her Ph.D. and moved to teach at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Two months later, her husband joined her in Minneapolis. She received full professorship in 1986. As the department of South Asian Languages and Literature decreased in both funding and size, Junghare became the sole professor of South Asian Studies and created a new department of Asian Languages and Literature in 2000. She has spent her life promoting South Asian culture through education; co-founding the School for Indian Language and Culture (SILC), South Asian Club, receiving The Council of Asian-Pacific Minnesotans Leadership Award (2000) and the Outstanding Community Outreach Activity Award at the University of Minnesota (2001), and tirelessly working on grants to keep the scholarship of South Asian literature alive.

In 1991, Junghare published an English translation of the novel *Maila Anchal (The Soiled Border)* by Phanishwarnath Renu. Junghare states, "Translations take an immense amount of time, a native understanding of the language and culture of the original text, along with skills in the language in which the text is translated." As such, she opted not to try the feat again. However, in 1994 Junghare co-translated *Bikhare Moti (Scattered Pearls)*, a collection of short stories by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan. Moved by Chauhan's poetry, Junghare found she equally admired her short stories. In addition Junghare undertook the translation because of the scarcity of women writers in Hindi literature: "I hope this translation will contribute to our knowledge of Indian culture and to our understanding of women's position in Indian society--particularly from the viewpoint of Indian women writers."



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Biography continued

In 1999, Junghare published her own volume of writing with a collection of poems entitled *The Poetry Pond*. The collection, published by Somaiya Publications PVT, LTD in Mumbai (Bombay) is divided into four sections: “Nature and the Animate,” “Humankind,” “Inner World,” and “Metaphysical/Trancendental” with the view of the Cosmos (ordered universe) in mind. Every poem is written in both Marathi and English and “the poems in the language of their composition for the most part appear superior to their transformations, forcing us to recognize the difficulties of translation.” This, however, does not inhibit Junghare’s message and profound feeling embodied in each poem.

Junghare’s memories of events, locations, daily life struggles, and her perceptions of society are conveyed in every line of her poetry. Her deep faith and Hindu roots are also revealed quite vividly. Many of the poems directly relate to Junghare’s own efforts in promoting South Asian culture:

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*No action is ever wasted
Man is always tested
Ever action takes him into the future
To the next life of some creature
Action creates humans
Man creates action
The latter rises from the former
This wheel of life moves on forever.*

Excerpt from “Actions Fruits”

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As Krishna relates the dharma of man's actions to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, so too does Junghare relate the importance of action through her poetry. Action, in every sense of the word, is exactly the way in which Junghare lives through educating others and through writing. As a South Asian woman writer, Junghare's experiences and life efforts truly endow her with the power of “A Free Woman.”



Indira Junghare

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