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VerbalArt

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Poets and Poetry

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VERBAL ART

*A Global Journal Devoted to
Poets and Poetry*

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL / 5

POETRY

Chandranath Mishra 'Amar'

- *Brahma's Anxiety / 9*

C. D. Norman

- *Who Waters the Brain? / 10*

J.W. Mark

- *Enuresis / 11*

Jason Teeple

- *Commonwealth / 12*
- *When Shadows Have Color / 13*
- *Different Faces / 14*

Jim Bennett

- *Clutching Leaves / 15*

Jonathan Greenhause

- *A Break with the Words / 16*
- *Inevitable / 17*

Lovita J R Morang

- *Gold-Dust / 18*
- *Rot Not / 19*

Neil Leadbeater

- *Having it out with the Power Lines
on a Stormy Evening in June / 20*

Sampriti Singha Roy

- *Winter / 21*
- *What Color / 22*

Shubh Schiesser

- *Morning Conversation / 23*
- *The Spa Ritual / 24*

Valentina Cano

- *Dinner, Ten Years Ago / 25*
- *The Infinite / 26*

Vaughan Gunson

- *Big love song #37 / 27*

Vennila Ramanathan

- *Recollections of an Adolescent Girl / 28*
- *Insight / 29*
- *Re-search? / 30*

Vinita Agrawal /

- *Running Out of Life / 31*
- *Time Out of Time / 32*

A. J. Huffman

- *An Unconventional Breaking / 33*
- *Because Breath / 34*

Aditya Shankar

- *Wasting Talent / 35*
- *One More Word / 36*

Laura Madeline Wiseman

- *Her Eyes / 37*
- *The Elms / 38*

April Salzano

- *Eating Poetry / 39*
- *I am Standing in My Closet Trying on Words / 40*

Ann Egan

- *A Wild July House / 41*

Avdhesh S. Jha

- *Nature / 42*

ARTICLES

C. L. Khatri

- *Dr.H. Tulsi and Her Mission for Reviving Structured Verse / 43*

Arun Babu

- *Rejuvenating Subaltern: A Study of the Poems of Amiri Baraka and Namdeo Dhasal / 58*

BOOK REVIEW

Jaydeep Sarangi

- *Review of Rizio Yohannan Raj's Exchanges with the Thinker / 73*

Rajnish Mishra

- *The Dance of the Peacock: Captivating Coruscations / 77*

INTERVIEW

Sunil Sharma

- *Talking Publication with Sudarshan Kcherry / 85*

CONTRIBUTORS / 91

EDITORIAL

VerbalArt is totally, completely, holistically and whole heartedly about the aesthetics of words, i.e. poetry. It is conceived with the aim of providing a platform to the creators of poems in English, either original or translated from other languages. As the name of the journal indicates, there's poetry on its pages, along with reviews, interviews with established poets and research/critical/academic articles on poets and poetry. The objective of the journal is to open the world of printed words to the makers of poems both new and old, and to open the world of poetry to all who care to look at the beauty that a well wrought poem is.

We have issued a call for submission and over the course of a few months we received hundreds of poems to be considered for this issue, submitted by poets from all over the world. As editors of this journal we are honoured by the participation of some gifted poets and this issue represents diverse, across-the-board and representative sample of the many works that were submitted, written in varied and lucid styles, diction and themes.

We are committed to give adequate exposure to our every published author and his every published piece of writing. Our new, updated and upgraded website is compelling enough to meet our endeavours and of authors too. We have now exclusive desk for authors, advisory members and editors which limelight the bio of every individual with his email, website, blog and contact number. Below the bio of every author the details of the journal's issue is also published in which his piece has been featured.

In a short span of time we have succeeded in getting the journal listed on the website of major online literary resources. Significant and noteworthy among them are CLMP (Council of Literary Magazines and Presses), Poetrykit, NewPages and Duotrope. Besides we send newsletters to the email-ids of more than twenty thousand authors. This data base of authors will keep on galloping with the publication of every subsequent issue.

We extend our sincere and affectionate thanks to all the authors who reposed faith on the promise posited by the journal and contributed their works and waited uncomplainingly to see them in prints. We hope with a great deal of conviction that the journal before your eyes will give a soothing effect to your creative vision.

Vivekanand Jha & Rajnish Mishra

POETRY

CHANDRANATH MISHRA 'AMAR'

Brahma's Anxiety

*Riding the plane of thought
I go round the heavens
Of imagination, looking around,
Looking east and west, north and south,
All the earth's corners four, all around the skies.
All the peals of the laughter
Of the demon that has found his way
Into the globe itself echoes with it!
The creator, Brahma, seems to sit, worrying,
With his head in his hands.*

*How he created man, the best of all,
Giving so much thought, so much care to it,
Endowing him with all the best
Resources of his creation,
But this most superior one
Has become the cause of ruin,
Depriving himself of his Self:
All the tenderness of his heart
Flying on to the candle-flame of his mind,
Like insects round the lamp!*

*The creator, Brahma, seems to sit, worrying,
With his head in his hands.*

* *The poem is originally written in Maithili and translated into English by
Murali Madhusudan Thakur*

C. D. NORMAN

Who Waters the Brain?

*Who waters the brain
for flowers of poems to bloom?
What induces the smile
to light up the face so bright?
Where lies the tranquil place
that gives enduring peace?
When does the heart over flow
with joy filled ecstasy?
How in this world of care
does one keep the mind free?
To what or whom do we owe?
Does anyone know?*

J.W. MARK

Enuresis

*My rock and yaw disturbs with ease
and wakes to find the dawn
bright streaming peeled to mattress seeped
for greater claims to cause*

*which strike to cling as armored flesh
from waxy drunken dreams
so cotton bounded blanket tied
my mattress traps to keep*

*Unbounded pool I see and smell
this yellow stinking stain
is sweet elixir, pungent drain
proof rancid bravery claimed.*

JASON TEEPLE

Commonwealth

*Despite the fiery rhetoric
From opposite sides of the isle
We are not so different
You and I.
We want the same things
Family, food and shelter.
People to have an opportunity
To to be healthy and have a meaningful life.
We get tripped up in the details.
We see different roads, leading to the same
Destination.
Please, take a moment
Let us transpose ourselves.
Now listen to all the people depending on you,
Giving them hope for a better tomorrow.
And I will listen to all the people,
So urgently calling for what is right.
Let's trade places while all else is the same,
Then we can agree that we are not so different.*

When Shadows Have Color

Paint a picture on my eye

Make the brush strokes colorful

Sing in my ear choruses, golden hymns played by angels

Fill the air I breath with the scent of sweet fruit

Skin to skin touch me everywhere at once

Sensuously enveloping me.

Let me savor a sweetness that fills and fulfills

Until streaming from my lips, nectar drips from my chin.

Then meet me with the moon watching us on high

And stay with me through the sweet hour of midnight

When the mind is tranquil as the deep sky

But if nothing else, give me a heart's loving empathy

For a tender and troubled soul.

Different Faces

*I molded
Different faces
Veils
Through which I hide
Shaped
To what you expect
Or want to see
Sometimes evil
Other times good
For each person
I sculpt a different mask
Together forming
A Multifaceted
Multi-faced
Facade
Which is me*

JIM BENNETT**Clutching Leaves**

*in the library there is a picture
a librarian standing with his arms wide
clutching the leaves of destroyed books
in his outstretched hands*

*his face looking upwards
his feet rooted forever on the Earth
the barrel of a rifle pointing
straight at him*

*there is no second photograph
showing the dead librarian
no note to say what happened
no way to know what the book was*

*just a man clutching pages
it must have meant something to him
it must have been important
to die for a metaphor*

*later I found out that it was
a scene from a film
that the man was an actor
not a librarian*

*he would have dropped the pages
into the pile around him
and gone home after filming ended
but maybe that didn't matter*

JONATHAN GREENHAUSE**A Break with the Words**

*If you could undo the garment spread,
unthread, un-knit the written words,
unmake the breaks of the wandering waves,
where would you guide the tongue of the tide?
Where would you bid the bliss of the bed*

*& the bottomless breath of the blinding sea?
Bring it bereaved with its sirens & ships,
its sorrowful chords, its shanties & coves;
fill it with phosphorescent fins,
with syllabic tales & magical scales.*

*Trace the thread of the aqueous salves,
rolling to the rhythm of the wondering whales;
if you could undo the garment spread
& unthread & un-knit the weight of our words,
you would, but you know it's too late.*

Inevitable

*You severed wet sand
to mark ocean from land,
but still it came:*

*Waves rollicking, brash,
a festive crash
loosening the walls,*

*your castle defamed
as the ocean erased
its battered base.*

*But still you kept trying
to keep such a sea
from rising.*

LOVITA J R MORANG

Gold-Dust

*if flesh be made of dust
if hopes becomes gold-dust
Nothing remains in heart
Hatred wiped off by love
Distant call of strangers song
Unicorn glide and gallop*

*Shattered citadel you call
Where my dream boat float
Come like the uninvited wild wind
Blow the dust away....
and be the gold-dust.*

Rot Not

Dream sleeps in deep sleeps

You will rot

If you talk ugly like that

Dispel your darkness

In the lights of sun my multitude of possibilities rise in me

The fire in you

is like the double edged sword

Burns Inside my skin

Where a river flow in my vein too

Cutting through the confluences

Of hundred hills

Where wildflowers Rhododendrons bloom and waits;

In the warmth of winter

Sun mounts;

waits for the last man to rise....

NEIL LEADBEATER

**Having it out with the Power Lines
on a Stormy Evening in June**

*Hurricane winds manhandled them into a mesh of
twisted metal. Lights went out
all over the city
and in that moment
the power went out of us, too,
so we were sapped of all energy
to do anything about it -
had hardly the strength
to curse the lines.*

*We were like a people semi-blind
feeling our way from room to room
searching for matches
to shed a light
where flames cast shadows big as banners
thrown against the wall.*

*When the weather cleared the engineers
left their vans
to have it out with the lines.*

*You can bet your life
they sparked.*

SAMPRITI SINGHA ROY

Winter

*The dead in the pyre of rotting flesh,
the houseflies jostling for the remains-
Winter has come to meet us all:
the dead, the buried, the dying or the tall.
The cold snow on his acid lips,
Has silenced the once smooth talker.
All that remains of him are the remains,
a puddle of blood, a drop of water.
A little child of a deflowered virgin,
goes around selling candles in vain.
For the winter has come to meet us all,
And it's snow will bury her light again.*

What Color

*The picture should be closed now;
I have given you all I have...
On account of a second's impulse!
What does that say about my virtues?
Does it cocoon my lack of it?
Or broaden the universe of desire
In the debris of stale pleasures,
I loved it, do not be offended!
Filling my crevasse with fluids murky:
That colors my inners red...
I cannot expect to be more fulfilled:
My sanctuary of a deal: sealed!
Tell me, what is the color of love?
Is it different from grief or loss?
Does it have a god to look up to;
A devil to shudder and fear?
I love you, I scream out in ways myriad.
And yet, my apparent voicelessness startles me not...
Tell me, dear love, what is the color of passion?
Is it bright like your eyes, or pale?
Like my beautiful social façade...
Is it red or yellow or green or white?
Tell me, dear love.
The picture is near its end...
And yet, I crave to know the beginning:
What color?*

SHUBH SCHIESSER

Morning Conversation

*Day-break swallow
twittering on the clothes line
in my courtyard
bobbing your tan head
looking down at me*

*let me finish my sleep
dream in the sweet breath of dawn*

*in spring you lined your nest
with straw and twigs
your sweet singing warmed
the marbled hearts of nestlings*

*now, in summer's passion
you strike a gentle chord again
and lay an egg on your perch
which falls to the ground
in a splash of yellow*

*I wonder who spoiled your nest
what made you abandon it?*

*Instead of answering
you tilt your head at me
and fly away.*

The Spa Ritual

*Tall bamboo peeked at my nakedness
Through the veil of willows
Surrounding the hot pool*

*My clothes melted
Under the shine of a harvest moon
Puddle at my feet
As I stepped towards my frolicking friends*

*Au naturel is not easy I learned
If I covered my breasts with washcloth
Down there would be uncovered
And if I covered down there
My upper part...*

*Despite the leering moon
The chorus of cicadas
Lulled me into a trance*

*Oyama san said:
Let's rub each other's backs
With washcloths
To strengthen our friendship
An old Japanese custom*

It was easy from then on

VALENTINA CANO

Dinner, Ten Years Ago

*The television bleeds in the living room
and I can't stop it.*

Any of it.

*The spinning of forks and knives
as we try to arrange assigned seats.*

*The gaps between us
have both spread and narrowed,
ebbing with each word
pulled like fish hooks from our mouths.*

*This is what broken glasses look like:
each shad so unique it will never
find its place again.*

The Infinite

*There's an ocean inside me,
with its moon dangling like a light-bulb,
weaving patterns for the waves to follow.*

*There's a collection of stars
that have burned clear off,
leaving holes through which light
threads through.*

*A solar system in my veins
and along the planes of my organs.*

*And I,
dark matter,
a black hole in reverse.*

VAUGHAN GUNSON

Big love song #37

(For John Keats)

*Your lily charms
aroused us to nectar*

*and we flew deep
into your folds*

*—but memory
of spaces wide*

*and the community
of the hive*

*struck an ordered note,
prompted a clarity*

*to return; to move us
in another dance.*

VENNILA RAMANATHAN

Recollections of an Adolescent Girl

*The swaying winds of memories
Rampantly move on the hot bed of fire;
their scorching radioactive rays
pass through the dilapidated debris of moments
meandering into a cheesy river of past.*

*The panorama of past runs faster
as the train of life becomes the hive of bees
buzzing and drilling through moments both raw and ripe;
the secret of the pollens within beautiful buds
is known to arrogant men when violent unwrapping
seizes the shriveling petals waiting for a gentle welcome.*

*Every flashback captures a lone moment,
the image of men passing through a crowd of women
for an angle of pleasure, to satiate the masculine thirst;
prickly fractions of lightening flash light upon
the labyrinth of my forlorn life,
a deceitful web, a fly entrapped, to show the
glowworms of my past
with its live embers in the present.*

Insight

*Everyone's ego whispers from
a well of thoughts sheltered beneath the tress of greed.
It coils inward as the vilest snake
with its hidden and hooked fangs ready
to suckle upon the dark cup of desires.
Heart and mind, the two great trespassers
dart an arrow of logic and reason at the multilayered
coils of ego;
the waves of greed disappear into tiny ripples and
the slimy partner
waits within its shell for a calm comeback.
Insight, the newfound victor, wanders from
the corner of one's ego to his quite reasonable mind,
passing through the viscous world unadorned.*

Re-search?

*The streaks of my brain swelled up,
little twigs peeped through the seeds of my desire
and the tree of knowledge signaled my impulses
to pursue greatness for its own sake.
It was a delirium, an unconscious urge in a demised state,
the trees shook their branches blessing me,
awakening my consciousness on the day of registration.
The first dictum of the guide on 'dedication'
set the first waves of tremors into me,
successive tremors continued till the end of my research.
It was a study within the study, a ring within a ring,
a struggle within the struggle, with his whip chasing behind.
I felt myself a bull harnessed with bells!
The nuances of my research nibbled my mind
and the first lesson I learnt was endurance.
The pillars of my body had to wait outside his den
to get the stamp of the lion's paw in every paper,
a delayed response each time to keep my nerve under control.
The moons of my research waned emaciated,
the fissures of my brain shrunk into a dry stream
and the gaps were filled with the boredom of drudgery
I researched more of supervisors than of the study.
His poisonous arrows pierced through my ignorance,
travelled and transformed into the fury of my heart
and reached upwards blurring my vision.
My journey across my study dragged me away
from the whirlpool of knowledge into the cemetery of mummies.
I craved for the past glory of blissful ignorance,
a head unbent, the blooms of my thoughts,
a life unfastened from the chariot of my research.*

VINITA AGRAWAL

Running Out of Life

*It has rained
and the stalks of wheat are thick with life*

*The lands between you and me are barren
Like air trapped inside a straw*

*Rains do not touch us
We are dying in the sun of our solitude*

*A seagull toots as it flies
excited by the water everywhere*

*In my dreams I seek your shade
The cool shadow of your voice, the colour of your light*

*I receive your seraphic scent from the winds
Like a travel diary of love, like a cartography of craving*

*What am I to do in these rains, what am I to do
Skull measurements of time have declared*

*that I am not Caucasoid, not Mongoloid, not Ethiopian
I belong to the Lonely Race.*

Time Out of Time

*We stood hand in hand
In those quiet pre dawn hours when
The bubble of night bursts to draw a breath of air
When old leaves on trees
Make blueprints of how to float to the ground
When fragrant tuberoses bid goodbye to darkness
In alluring scented breaths*

*Watched the fading twinkle of lights
Sighing as silhouettes of skyscrapers returned to life
You laughed when I tugged at the moon like a kite
Reluctant to let it go
Morning moons are so seductive
I whispered in your ear*

*We took turns
To stymie the seconds
Foil the rhythm of minutes
Baulk the hours, thwart the day
We left our pillows untouched
Lest time passed us by
Spoke constantly like the hub of a wheel in motion
Lest we broke down in the silence of empty breaths*

*We gathered lovely names for our unborn children
Offered their unborn minds our sweetest dreams
We knelt before the universe in prayer
We did this, we did that,
We died but never died, lived but never lived
In those stolen moments of togetherness
Managing barely, to reach each other's shores*

A. J. HUFFMAN

An Unconventional Breaking

*He carved me in stone, so he could be
the last one to break me. Miscalculating hammer
thrusts left me disproportionate, too heavy
above the shoulders, too hollow in the chest.
Then he put me on a pedestal, high enough to breathe.
I forgot I was supposed to be his reflection,
took flight on wings I carved for myself. Too eager
to prove my independence, I melted
a few times,
but that didn't stop me from trying to warm
my fingers on the sun.*

Because Breath

*catches when skin touches skin, heart
hesitates, skips a beat
before racing to catch up with itself,
I hesitate, hold my body uncertainly
just beyond your reach.*

*can consume when whispering the promised
words of forever in darkened rooms
where inhibitions are weakened, convinced
into blindness, I concede, move myself
into your devouring space.*

*incinerates the defenseless, the trusting
body that gave itself to the darkness
against the warning of ingrained instincts,
I am ash to your flame, joined
in combustion, igniting in framed expanse
of this mutually unmade bed.*

ADITYA SHANKAR

Wasting Talent

Wasting talent is one way of doing justice:

*to assure humanity no one can see a world
with greater pain and joy*

It's something the communists will support

*If you smoke a pipe, peace –
Your neighbor does it too*

*Buy vegetables, book apartments,
sip a coffee, enjoy colors in traffic lights,
gasp at the length of expressways*

*equality is achievable as long as
all you do is gossip or work or sex.*

One More Word

*I offer the loner bee
one more word to weave its nest*

*let it, like all things we say and do
hang in the hope of being inhabited*

*anything with an inside, and therefore secrets
with a beak or a lip, and therefore connects
with a face, and therefore reminds –*

*let it be an indoor plant that grows
aspiring the dampness of river banks.*

LAURA MADELINE WISEMAN

Her Eyes

*Vacant as a cemetery, a high, a drive without destination
my future was unknown to me walking among
the cottonwoods:*

*they would glow, like a power plant at night, they would
hold and let go, to recall the open door, they would return
to work and bloodshot on weeknights, they would stare
at the TV, strain, and not blink, like a shadow in the corner
they would terrorize me with their impenetrability,
they would hide behind locked bedroom doors, they would
vanish behind sunglasses—wild and roaming the house,
at five a.m. screaming; they would close dreamless
every night and open without plans for the week
they would brown the evening sky to necrotic smoke.*

*Or are they depression, black holes—her eyes a pit opening,
my strong legs that climbed, hopeful vehicle, out.*

The Elms

*They've begun to overlap, those other houses,
blending, growing taller, and full of toothed leaves
like female lions: snowdrifts to the windows,
boggy spring, or summer of gnats licking our blood.
Now the roots follow the bedrock, branches
clutch the sky, hard and frantic, as the core strengthens
over rot (insects, disease, age). But that last gated view
remains open and wide, braided sinuously
in the center of the body, some pulsing fold
that embraced darkness. Yes, they were lacerated:
those diseased limbs, but others were fed, plant and
water of life.*

APRIL SALZANO**Eating Poetry**

*Mornings I wake ravenous, as if breaking
a fast. Meat of metaphor ripped
from bone, cartilage and fat torn with teeth,
blood staining lips. I crack the spine,
drink the fluid. I cannot get enough,
even when my seams threaten to tear.
Other pieces I lick slowly, like hard candy.
Refined sugar coats my tongue, bits
I suck for flavor, taste buds tingling
from bitterness, an ache in my throat.
Some are swallowed whole, others discarded.
By daybreak, I am sated, remember
particular flavor for hours, scent
on my fingers, begin the hunt for more.*

I Am Standing in My Closet Trying on Words

*Nothing is working out to be the right fit.
Ambiguity is too loose. It drapes around
my hips, masks my hard-earned curves.
Falsehood is tight and constricting
like a turtleneck. I cast aside
detached and cunning as each has its own
share of flaws, threads hanging from seams
I don't dare pull for fear of unraveling. I have
no shoes to match Altruistic. Leather
boots in various heel heights lay scattered
on the floor because Deceptive needs to be
hemmed even when worn with stilettos.
I have given up on Justified and Introspective,
and exit my closet inarticulate.*

ANN EGAN

A Wild July House

*My eaves are slanted grey lines
that never again will sail parallel,
broken sad things, askew to the wind
that flails the ragged side of me.*

*My colours from the old world
are splayed like butterflies
stored in a museum's dead corner.
My windowpanes' gleam long fled*

*are crystals in my memory,
except for the red and blue ones,
scrimped and huddled to my breast.
I can scatter them on wild flowers*

*I try to grow in my boundaries.
Sparrows peck my loss
with kindly beaks, when they cross
my barriers they fall like children*

*playing ring, a ring a rosie,
resting like wishes on the gravel.
You hear it creek my protests!
I'm standing roofless, windowless,*

*a shoeless house, walking
the begging ways of my staying.
I'm like those dandelion seeds,
trembling on the least puff,*

ready to fall to pieces.

AVDHESH S. JHA

Nature

*Warm, charming, and easy-going;
Serious and stable is the nature
Tactful and diplomatic,
Morning, noon, eve and night is the nature.*

*Unhidden, shy and cool;
White moon light is the nature
Intimate, desire and a feeling,
Caring expressions and emotions is the nature.*

*Beauty, fair and just;
Potential, quality and ability is the nature
Humanity, strength and power,
Sometimes violent and turbulent is the nature.*

*Sensitive, creative, and loving;
Sun, moon, stars and planets is the nature
Certain but unpredictable,
Silent is the nature.*

*Ocean of simplicity and season of vicinity;
Height of ethnicity and light of divinity is nature;
Noble, bold and ideal selfless self;
Green and simple is the nature.*

*Passion of science, commerce and arts;
Desire of harmony and refinement is the nature;
Quick and intuitive, but lack of expression and
Unanswered question is the nature.*

ARTICLES

Dr. H. Tulsi and Her Mission for Reviving Structured Verse

C. L. KHATRI

Indian English poetry by women since 1980 witnessed a major shift from the women centric, body centric consciousness or what M.K.Naik says Kamala Das's "brown burden"(Naik,184) to their involvement in social, political criticism, their engagement with the vagaries of live, the fast changing world like any poet cutting across gender boundary. They rise above the mannerism in which Kamala Das and some others lapsed. Secondly most of the women poets of the second phase have virtually left the scene and a new crop of poets emerged in whom the victim conscious is not as prominent as it was in their predecessors. Mamata Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Monika Verma, Tilottama Rajan, Gauri Pant, M.A.Dasgupta have not published any new poetry collections since 1980. Of course Kamala Das's Collected Poems and The Soul Knows How to Sing; Selections from Kamala Das appeared in 1985 and 1997 respectively. Among the new crop of poets are Eunice de souza, Tara Patel, Kavita Ezekiel, Imtiaz Dharkar, Melanie Silgardo, Menka Shivdasani, Mukta Sambrani, R.B Nair, Asha Viswas, Vijaya Goel and many others writing from different parts of India on a wide range of themes and in various forms and idioms of poetry. In them we find both continuity and change but there is no face off with their predecessors. Perhaps they are not

ready to take on the icons, to take on the establishment, to take it as even half time vocation as Ezekiel did, as Kamala Das did. Maybe this is one reason why poets are sold; poetry is not sold, fiction in English is selling more than Hindi Fiction; poetry is not selling. There must be a meaningful deliberation on it. Should the poets keep in mind the target audience/ readers or like T.S. Eliot Should they create taste? Should there be some ideological / philosophical alignment or alignment with socio-political and cultural movement? Or should poets remain confined to self expression, self publication and self satisfaction? The popular perception of poetry is that it is something to be sung; it is musical, proverbial and hence it is memorable or it tells a tale that immediately relates itself to the audience/ readers. The intellectual perception on the other hand tells that images, symbols, varied allusions should be the vehicle of poetry. Poetry becomes a riddle, an abstruse code to be decoded without any definite result in an intellectual exercise. It is to be enquired whether this shift has shifted poetry from the people. There should be debate on this dichotomy between popular and elitist perceptions of poetry. Traditional verse forms generally belong to the folk tradition and to the oral tradition. We have moved away from that and hence poetry lost its link with the tradition, with its root.

This takes me to a poetry movement in India launched by H. Tulsi in the post 1980 period. She has been advocating for the revival of traditional forms of poetry like sonnet, elegy, ballad, tanka, ode, rondeau, villanelle, hymn, psalm etc. She has been trying to create taste for structured verse. She gives her own plea;

The ferry—boat of modern age seems to have carried our Indian poets writing in English to a new and strange bank fringing the kingdom of free verse—heretofore avoided or, if at all, rarely visited in olden days. It is found that, during the latter part of this century, almost ninety percent of Indian poets have been

indulging themselves in this sort of poetry in English which, literally speaking, is hardly different from paragraph writing. Merely by breaking up, at random, a piece of prose into lines of varying length, each containing a dissimilar number of words, can one transform prose into poetry? (Foreword, Resurrection)

We may partly disagree in principle but the mushrooming practice somehow validates it to a great extent. We would also admit that there lies some art in arranging ones thoughts and feelings in a predesigned structure and it demands greater concentration, precision and metrical skill from the poets; and in effect it is more musical, artistic and pleasing to the ears than the free rush for free verse. Whatsoever our poetic prejudices maybe we should allow the endangered species to survive and thrive. I know sense should not be sacrificed for sound but there are ways to honour both; and the great poets of the world in the past have shown it. Key to it lies in what Alexander Pope said "the sound must seem an echo to the sense." "The sense of inner harmony, and of its right relation to the feeling behind what is being said, is basic to good poetry."(Rosenthal & Smith,66) However it must be kept in mind that the contemporary age is not averse to classical forms of poetry. Several classical forms have come into vogue in recent time independent of her movement. Haiku and Tanka being practised by Urmila Kaul, R.K. Singh and many others, Limerick being practiced by D. H. Kabadi, M.K. Naik and others, Gazal is experimented in English by Agha Shahid Ali. Sonnet has been the most popular among them.

H. Tulsi, a self made poet, painter and practitioner of south Indian instrumental music has so far produced ten volumes of poetry in different structured verse forms. Her first poetry collection Resurrection Book I appeared in 1993 and since then she has been consistently composing or casting poetry in different traditional casts of poetry. She founded Metverse Muse a biannual poetry journal devoted entirely to metrical verse in 1996 providing a platform to such

practitioners from across the globe. One perceptible impact I observed is that many of the free verse practitioners have tried their hands at structured verse, too. I do not intent to assess its influence. But if there is any movement or it gains greater attention tomorrow, the credit goes to her. The present paper intends to evaluate her major poetic concerns, her artistic designs or poetic forms and to assess her contribution to Indian English poetry. She calls her first five collections a series of Resurrection. They are: Resurrection (1993), Sonnet Century (1995), Nosegay Of New Year Poems (1998), Ballads & Ballades(1995) and Lyrical Lays(2000). The present study is based on four of these books excluding Nosegay Of New Year Poems and Old Wine in New Bottles (1993). Her other poetry works are Laugh Awhile Limericks, Villanelles & Contranelles, Rondeaus & Roundelays and Odes & Elegies.

The very title Resurrection Book I to V is indicative of her missionary motive for the revival of old poetic forms. She not only revives the forms but also revisits the conventional or say the Romantic themes – the bewitching beauty of Nature, flower, birds, trees, animals, star, moon and divine providence. The very first poem “Shattered Verse with Battered Rhyme and Tattered Rhythm” reads like Derozio’s “My Native Land”. The former laments the loss of rhyme and rhythm – the crowning glory of poetry and the latter laments the loss of nation’s glory. Naidu glorifies rhyme and rhythm and lays bare her perception of poetry and the poetry being practiced today.

*But now, O Rhyme, where has gone your sway?
Where’s your hold on poets of today?
Pressed for time, perhaps—your height to rise—
Their needs, they try, with ‘free verse’ to suffice.
I grieve, O Rhyme, to see you badly battered
And Rhythm’s royal robes sadly tattered.
Your place of pride may you soon regain;
With rhythmic steps may Verse dance again.*

(Resurrection, 9-10)

This volume as if in early exuberance tries to introduce several popular verse forms like sonnet, ode, elegy, couplets and lyrics. "Fierce you Are But Also Fair" is composed in an oval shape beginning and ending with monometer and in the center the lines in the stanza run in hexameter perhaps to show the dance of death and the cyclic nature of time. Her romantic exuberance, celebration of the bounty of nature like a Nature poet is conspicuous in several poems for example, "An Alliterated Ode in Honour of Spring":

*I welcome your approach, O sprightly spring;
The year's sweetest season you're to me;
The golden master—key you kindly bring
To set the wondrous wealth of nature free!
No more the sullen scenes of wintry weather,
Dark and dismal like the dying day:
All lurking life you wake and call together
With fun and frolic, joyous to play.*

(Resurrection, 11)

In another ode on flowers she creates a sensuous picture of flowers of different hues.

*With all your splendid shades of colours in abundance
Not even can the pretty rainbow vie:
To beat your unassuming, mild and pleasant fragrance
The perfume of the musk can hardly try!*

(Resurrection, 46)

One may call them and many such poems simple descriptive panegyric verse that reveals everything and holds back nothing. But picturesque image and the sonorous music invite the readers to revisit. Her rhythm of natural speech as typified in her preference for iambic feet reinforces her concern for common experiences of a bard of Nature. In some poems she tells a narrative to serve a moral purpose for example in "Errs the Past And Pays the Present" she creates a fable of triangular relationship among flower, butterfly and bees in which the

champak plant strikes a bargain with the gardener for 'extra manure-breed' and in return promises: "My future flowers I promise you- / through bees to get your honey." When the flowers bloom on the champak plant and make love with a butterfly, bees intrude and kill the butterfly and peace of the garden.

*The day she traded womb for belly
 Sadly rues the mother;
 How oft do parents' debts or deeds
 Their blameless children smother!*

(Resurrection, !6)

In a few poems he deftly uses interior monologues as in "A Beggar's Progress" to evoke dramatic effect in gradual overpowering of the poet:

*Next day, I hear him softly say:
 "Transfer your chain if you value your life,"
 In a trance, as it were, I meekly obey,
 Riveting my eyes on his pointing knife!*

(Resurrection, 53)

Sonnet is a popular form of poetry even today. We all know Vikram Seth's experiment with a long sonnet sequence in The Golden Gate to tell a narrative. He successfully uses tetrameter instead of iambic pentameter. H.Tulsi's second work Sonnet Century is a collection of sonnets and a few short sequences. There is uniformity neither in stanza divisions nor in meter. All sorts of stanza divisions are experimented: Octave and sestet as in "The Body and the Brain" in iambic pentameter, Octave and two triplets as in "A Questionnaire", three quatrains followed by a couplet as in 'Awaiting the Muse'. 'The Fiery Battle', then octave + couplet + quatrain as in a sonnet sequence consisting of four sonnets of four different stanza formations. Again both pentameter and tetrameter are employed and at times both are present in the same poem. Similarly she is not consistent with 'iambus' or 'trochee'. At

times trochee is induced to bring contrast in rhythm. Perhaps she is introducing sonnet in its different forms with metrical innovation as well. Her sonnet sequences seem to be inspired by Vikram Seth's The Golden Gate as they are in narrative mode. For this purpose a full length sonnet sequence with a story should have been preferred. However, one concurs with Maha Nand Sharma who says: "One cannot but marvel at her rich imagination, her vivid expression of the significant truths of life and death, her visual and aural sensuousness, her apt similes, her tension laden narration of various psychic conditions and the breath-taking suspense" (Blurb, The Sonnet Century) as exemplified in "The Fiery Battle":

*He stared me full in the face: I stared back.
With wrath he flared: I too soon grew hot.
Blood-shot turned his eyes: my looks turned black.
We glared and glowered, face to face thus brought!
But fiercer when he fumed, my palms went wet.
The more I cowered the more he towered with rage.
His horrid heat made me bath in sweat.
Yet mutely, both did we our battle wage. (TSC 10)*

The subtle turn of thought, perceptible in the concluding couplet of some of her sonnets reveals her dexterity and impresses the readers:

*"Losing all, my neighbor soundly slept
While I, for losing, vigil kept. (TSC 21)*

Oe

*"Oft did we exchange a loving kiss:
but now our love she does not seem to miss. (TSC 45)*

The poems are replete with Hindi words, classical and mythical references that invite critical dialogue with the readers. Her sonnets are scattered in her several volumes. She composes Shakespearean sonnets and Petrarchan sonnets with perfect

metrical skill. For example in Shakespearean sonnet "To The New Millennium" she invokes divine intervention to restore peace in the world, and to dispel war:

*"May your first born be a War exporter,
Exporting War to Hell by fastest planes!
May the next one be a Peace-importer,
Importing Peace from Heaven by dove-trains!
This wondrous ware could be our magic wand
To exorcise all evils from our land." ("Lyrical Lays", 39)*

In Old Wine in New Bottles she seems more on a tutorial venture rather than on poetic enterprise. It is a slim handy book of proverbs, idioms, synonyms, alliteration, rhyming words and tongue twisters dexterously or painstakingly knitted in poems in quatrains and lines in pentameter and tetrameter. There is greater consistency in these poems. The poems are all concentrated on moral, universal and proverbial subjects like "Industry Versus Indolence". "Precaution Versus Avarice" "Humility versus Pride" etc. There is little role of a critic in this book. Just two excerpts would suffice to show the purpose of poet:

*Art is long while life is very short,
And half of it is spent before we know it:
Once gone, Time returns not;
Employ it well – it's every little bit.
An hour today is worth two tomorrow;
Hoist your sail when the wind is fair;
Postpone not today's work till morrow;
As swift as wind Time flies in air! (OWNB, 11)*

"Or"

*If all you try to grasp, you lose all;
To two in bush, prefer a bird in hand;
Greed with foreign lands in love does fall;
Contentment loves his own mother-land. (OWNB, 15)*

In lyrical Lays she offers a bouquet of different poetic forms neatly categorized in Hymns, Serenades, Odes, epitaphs & Elegies and one fantasy. Hymns are as usual prayers to 'Shiva-Shivani', 'Saraswati' and to God in general in simple lucid language devoid of clichés. They are composed in Bhakti tradition:

*To distinguish between black and white
Things of the world that go in disguise,
O Lord, I sorely need thy Light. (LL 9)*

In these poems he seeks peace, love and light from God.

*Thy Love and Light can teach mankind
How, to all, to be generous and kind.
Thy Love and Light can mend our mind
And help us folk to finally find
The peace we need, O God. (LL 10)*

In "A Child's Prayer" we find ingrained the 'Sarvoday bhav' for the world and the Upanishadic message of Ekam Sat Vipra Vahudha Vadanti"

*"It's you yourself I love, and not your name;
let mankind know that all the Gods are same" (LL 14)*

"A Hymn to Him" is suffused with Upanishadic and Puranic references like 'Maayaa Sakti', 'Kriya Sakti', 'Para', 'Ichcha', 'Aadi', 'Gnyaana', 'chit', Venkateswara', 'Visveswara', etc. to attain a sort sublimity in a Brahminical sense. These terms facilitate the articulation of philosophical wisdom and understanding of truth. But what is more remarkable is the tinge of irony and the spirit of questioning.

*But left upon the earth are countless lowly weeds
Whose sleeping souls have not been sown with high grade seeds
Of love, compassion, wisdom and tolerance of all creeds.
What is Bhakti's essence? Merely mouthing mantra-s*

*While practising, behind the scenes, faulty tantra-s
Like pulling strings and greasing palms, O Ananta?
(LL 11)*

Then the tone abruptly changes to articulate the Upanishadic truth:

*No beginning Thou hast had; Thou art also endless.
In spite of all the forms ascribed, Thou art formless
And, in truth, with all Thy names, Thou art nameless.
(LL 11)*

Some of her poems in this book can really prove the solace of the readers' souls with soothing and serene effect. A devotee would empathize with her when she tries to wed with God reminding for a while a flash of Meera Bai:

*Impatient I, your honoured spouse to be,
O beauteous bride, my most beloved Sea!
But Fate whispers in her menacing tone
That wedded we can be by Death alone!
Let then this Archak come, I'm dying to die
So that I may, within your embrace, lie.
If such be Vidhi's writing on my forehead,
My watery grave shall be our nuptial bed.
(LL 18)*

She not only endeavours to retrieve forgotten forms of poetry but also our cultural heritage, spiritual quest and age-old value system and in this light we can see her feminist concern or human angst. She revives divine empire to intervene in the ongoing killing of female foetus and consequently an Akashwani comes:

*To harm the fair sex should you again try.
Should girls or women ever threatened be,
Your family's male members, all, shall die—
Wiping off your lineage completely!
Innocent sufferers' instant savior, I!
(LL 23)*

Gandhian spirit runs high in “A Swan’s Swan- Song” written on the murder of Gandhiji in a saintly tone without any trash of bitterness and gives a message of forgiveness and compassion to the world:

*Let us only pray to God,
his selfishness and hate
may, some day, abate.
All creatures created by the Lord
loves He at least, I know.
I therefore content go:
So covet not the punishing rod. (LL 54)*

In “Epitaphial Epistle” she laments on what we have made of Gandhi:

*“O Bapuji, I am sure you never thought
While leaving us, that such would be your lot”!*

This is one of the few poems in which she ruefully articulates her acute consciousness of the grim realities of the world in which Gandhi’s dreams are shattered. And she seeks remedy in Gandhi himself:

*Back in boxes theirs to trap and shut
these foul freedoms all—now in glut—
from your grave, like a phoenix won’t you rise
O Gandhiji in that Piper’s guise?
This Pandoras’ call is not of Hind all;
a world-wide cry this is, in high-pitched tone. (LL 63)*

Irony, pathos and wishful cry are blended here in this well structured elegy underlying the global relevance of Gandhi, today.

The last one in this evaluation Ballads and Ballades is a collection of three Ballads: “How Ram Wins Sita”, “Jason and the Golden Fleece”(Greek) and “Ilhataina” (American) and three Ballades: Bheeshma’s Vow”, Death of Balder” (Nordic) and

“Oisin”(Celtic). Ballads are written in the normal Ballad Stanza, quatrain while in Ballades different stanza and rhyming patterns are adopted with a uniform hexameter. They are viewed as an attempt to retrieve two of the oldest forms of verse. Bernard M. Jackson observes: “Combining sensitive use of the ballad form and its disciplined rhyming patterns with superb narrative skills she covers a considerable field of folklore, presenting a captivating pot-pourri of well-loved tales drawn from Greek, Indian, American, Nordic and Celtic sources. In their new picturesque settings, enriched with heightened alliterative phrasing, and hallmarked by a certain lyrical quality, ascribed more to assonance than to actual rhyming techniques, the fluency of her stanzas finds smoothness of pace, and charm of cadence in their joyous rendition.” (Review, Metverse Muse, Jan-June, 1998, 94)

One is tempted to ask what Monier Williams asked in the context Indian Epic Poetry whether such works are “the time-honoured repository of their legendary history and mythology, of their ancient customs and observances, as well as of their most cherished gems of poetry”.(Qtd by Ramchandra Prasad, Introduction, Ramacharitamanasa, xix)

The rendering of a narrative from popular myth is a double edged sword; it can easily make one poet: “Ram tumhara naam swayam hi kavya hai, koi kavi ban jay sahaj sambha hai”. On the other hand such work naturally invites comparison with the best one available on the subject. For example “How Ram Wins Sita” takes us to the Ramacharitmanas particularly of swayambar scene in Baala Kanda or to Nirala’s Ram Ki Shakti Puja and it obviously reveals the gap. She fails to evoke the emotions of love, suspense, anxiety, heroism, anger and wonder to the original level, which are very much there in the original scene of the epic or the intense internal conflict and turmoil in Ram Ki Shakti Puja. Take for example the tender emotion of love in Ram expressed in these terms by Tulasidasa:

*Dekhi Bipul Bikal Baidehi; Nimish Bihat Kalap Sam Tehi.
Trishit Bari Binu jo Tanu Tyaga; Muyen Karai Ka Sudha
tadaga.*

*(He found Videha's Daughter terribly agitated every
moment was hung on her as an age. When a thirsty man
perishes for want of water, of what avail is a lake of nectar
to him.)*

("Baalakaanda", Ramacharitamanasa, 176)

*The moment when the bow was broken by Ram is described
by H. Tulsi and I quote here:*

*Resounding was acclaim and praise;
Thunderous was applause.
Both young and old sang and danced:
For jollity there was cause. (BB 19)*

*One misses the magical charm and the poetic height that one
has already witnessed in Tulasidasa:*

*Bhare Bhuwan Ghor Kathore Rav Rabibaaaji Tazi
Maaragu chale*

*Chikkarhin Diggaj Dole Mahi Ahi Kole Kurum Kalmale.
Sur Asur Muni Kar Kaan Dinhe Sakal Bikal Bichaarahi;
Kodand Khandeu Ram Tulasi Jayati Bachan Ucharahi.*

*(So awful a crash re-echoed through the spheres that the
horses of the sun-god strayed from their path, the
elephants of the four quarters trumpeted, earth shook, and
the serpent king, the divine boar and the tortoise fidgeted
in disquiet. Gods, demons and sages all put their hands
to their ears, and all began anxiously to ponder the cause;
but when they learnt, says Tulasidasa, that Ram had
broken the bow, they uttered shouts of triumph.)*

("Baalakaanda", Ramacharitamanasa, 177)

*Similarly "Ilhataina" based American myth invites the
unfavourable comparison with Longfellow's Hiawaths.
Certainly in "Ilhataina", the American myth does not reach the
dizzy height or the poetic height of Longfellow's HIAWATHS
based on the same myth. This would always be a difficult one*

to tackle. Nevertheless, 'ILHATAINA' does have its pleasing qualities and her Ballads and Ballades are able to involve the readers and keep them going on till the end. They have their own narrative value for the non- natives. We should also keep in mind that Ballad has its own limitation compared to Epic.

Dr. Tulsi's use of descriptive language is praiseworthy, and the clarity of her characterization indicates careful forethought in its detailed construction. "Jason And The Golden Fleece", for example, gives us a 'virtuous Aeson', 'his wicked brother Pelias', Hercules of matchless strength and 'crafty Cupid, amongst similar allusions. The most endearing of these six lovely poems is the Celtic offering, 'OISIN'. Although the shortest of those included, it moves with remarkable pace, heightened by that haunting envoy. (B. M. Jackson, Review, *Metverse Muse*, Jan-June, 1998, 94)

H. Tulsi has been doing a commendable job in preparing upcoming poets for structured verse through workshops, poetry competitions and publication. One simply wonders at her metrical skill that enables her to compose verse in most of the traditional verse forms. Her commitment for and dedication to the traditional structured poetry is a rare sight today. It is her full time vocation. Her own poetry and of others in similar nature certainly invite critical attention and offers a virgin area of research for researcher scholars and musical cadence for poetry lovers.

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Rejuvenating Subaltern: A Study of the Poems of Amiri Baraka and Namdeo Dhasal

ARUN BABU

The primary motive of Dalit literature is the liberation of dalits. Shame, anger, sorrow and indomitable hope are the stuff of Dalit literature. The subaltern communities found a new name by coming together with the perspective “the dalit is signified” thereby rejecting the subhuman status imposed on them by the social order. Dalit literature questions the mainstream literary theories and upper caste ideologies and explores the neglected areas of life. Authenticity and liveliness have become the hallmarks of Dalit literature. Dalit writers make use of the language of the outcastes and the underprivileged in society.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, both the African American man and the Dalit man emerge on their respective socio-political scenes and attempt to reconstruct their identities by first claiming their humanitarian rights. The Black man of the Black Power Movement in the 1960s’ United States and the Dalit Panther of the 1970s in India embrace violence to demonstrate their anger and frustration against race and caste supremacists. Imamu Amiri Baraka in USA and Namdeo Dhasal in India are two such artists whose politically motivated art and social activism articulate the frustration with race and caste supremacists through militant and aggressive vocabulary and anti-establishment messages.

*Taking Chela Sandoval’s theory of oppositional and differential consciousness, as discussed in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, as a framework, this paper states that Baraka and Dhasal employ a “differential consciousness” (5,6) to emancipate the colonized minds of their fellow subalterns, like*

their decolonialist predecessors and contemporaries W.E.B. DuBois, Ambedkar, Frantz Fanon, Roland Barthes, Black Power activists, and other revolutionary thinkers. This study contend that Baraka and Dhasal anticipate theorists of “postmodernism” of the 1980’s and “globalization” of the 1990’s in promoting a “mode of oppositional consciousness” to be articulated by the “[fellow] subordinated” (Sandoval 8, 9). Their aggressive diction and obscene idioms are aspects of their oppositional consciousness.

It is important to note that Dhasal co-founded the Dalit Panther in 1972 as “a militant activist dalit organization” and it was his political agenda to brutalize upper caste sensibility by violently opposing it. DilipChitre notes that the “purpose of the Dalit Panther was to bring young dalit men and women together and organize continuous action and protest against the oppression of dalits in Maharashtra and elsewhere in India” (Dhasal 13). Dhasal continued his political activism through organizations and through his political writing, namely poetry. Chitre writes: “...Namdeo is a born activist and Dalit Panther his raison d’etre, as much as poetry is the life of his spirit. Namdeo cannot separate his activism from his poetry, and his poetry is only the literary form of his activism” (Dhasal 15).

Amiri Baraka in his Black Nationalist phase embraced the tenets of Black Power and made his writing, poetry, plays, a novel and essays, a medium for expressing the legitimate anger of the oppressed Blacks. For Baraka, “political action and political art” work together to address the “urgency and impatience” of the time. “We want ‘poems that kill.’/Assassin poems, Poems that shoot/guns.../Knockoff/poems for dope selling wops or slick halfwhite/politicians...Setting fire and death to/whities ass” in “Black Art” is only a that in the late 1950s and 1960s music took “more ‘radical’ changes and re-evaluations of social and emotional attitudes toward the general environment” (Ellison 235). To Baraka, music has always meant freedom: “Music is an emotional experience and a

philosophical one. ...Moving in the blue/black streets there was freedom, a possibility of becoming anything I could imagine. I was completely on my own (and even more so once I realized it) and everything in that world began and was defined by me, in me, by music" (Autobiography 48-50). In "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)" Baraka describes "Rhythm and Blues...(as) part of the 'national genius,' of the Black man, of the Black nation... of urban and rural... Black America," thereby establishing his concept of the Blacks inhabiting a nation of their own within the United States (Reader 190). Again, Baraka argued in "The Legacy of Malcolm X, and the Coming of the Black Nation" that "black People are a race, a culture, a Nation" (Reader xxiv).

Both artists recognize that their respective countries are divided into two 'nations' or 'worlds' along the lines of race and caste, respectively. Fanon's description of the "native' sector" versus the European sector demonstrates the Manichean divide between the worlds (Dhasal) and nations (Baraka) of the Dalits and the Blacks and their respective colonizers' sectors. Fanon writes:

The colonist's sector...all stone and steel...(is)...a sector of lights and paved roads...where the streets are clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone. The colonist's sector is a sated, sluggish sector, its belly is permanently full of good things.....The colonized's sector (is)...the shanty town....a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow...It's a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other...(it) is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light,....a sector on its knees. (Fanon 4-5)

The poems of Dhasal and Baraka discussed here depict their experience of and compassion with the degraded condition of their fellow human beings. The subsequent pieces articulate the bottled up anger and frustration against the hegemonic power structures. Both poet-activists emphasize the humanity of their

fellow subalterns and recognize, as pointed out by Fanon, that when the colonized “discover their humanity, they begin to sharpen their weapons to secure its victory” (Fanon 8). The two poets employ the methodology of the oppressed, as defined by Chela Sandoval, that enables the “differential mode of oppositional social movement”

In “MandakiniPatil: A Young Prostitute, My Intended Collage” from his first collection of poetry, Golpitha(1972), NamdeoDhasal registers his deep sympathy for the Dalit prostitute, Mandakini, who is consumed by her clients and her circumstances. It is important to note that the Dalit woman often forms the image of rock-bottom social degradation in Dhasal’s work. In what resembles a dramatic monologue, Dhasal underscores the meaningless sexual relationships she (the absent addressee) engages in from a very tender age in order to survive. While representing the pathetic circumstances of her life, he warns her not to mistake these paid sexual liaisons for love, and writes: “In the backyard of love, all you find is fruits of fear and disgust” (Dhasal 56). He compares ‘love’ to “infinite and sovereign nothingness” (56). This profound sympathy for the most degraded humanity stirs disgust and revulsion in Dhasal’s mind against the social hierarchy of caste-Hindus that conspires with urban poverty to engender such dehumanization.

Similar to Dhasal’s case, Baraka represents the sordid life of Peaches in his NAME OF POEM and in the process speaks for her. Although Peaches, like Mandakini, may not be in a position to articulate her own condition, it is important to keep Spivak’s warning in mind: the subaltern woman is always spoken for. AudreLorde in her critical evaluation of the 1960s’ reminds the reader of the appropriation of different voices within the Black community: “...Black women were told that (their) only useful position in the Black Power movement was prone” (“Learning from the 60s” 456).

Nevertheless, out of his experience with and compassion for the degradation of fellow blacks, Baraka 'screams' in his frustration against the white world that has created such a condition for the poor urban blacks. He realizes that white colonialism in USA "purposefully, maliciously and with a reckless abandon relegated the black man to a subordinated, inferior status in the society" (Carmichael 23). From this point, both Dhasal and Baraka promote vengeful resistance against the oppressors through aggressive language and aim for what Sandoval refers to as "psychic emancipation" (xii, xiii). They assume violent masculinity in order to compensate for years of emasculation of their fellow subalterns. Dhasal writes "Man, You Should Explode" to encourage his fellow Dalits to question and defy the caste system and elitist politics that have subjugated a majority of the population in India. Similarly, Baraka writes "It's Nation Time" to call on Black people to claim their identity as Black and not "Negro" people by contemning the white supremacy.

Dhasal's "Their Orthodox Pity" registers all that the Dalits are deprived of in their socio-political existence by the upper castes, the "feudal lords" (Dhasal 47). The Dalit-speaker articulates how categorically his fellow people are marginalized by those who have "locked all light in their vault" and "imposed" "this lower life" on them, the Dalits. Rendering them completely "helpless," the higher castes do not even allow a "pavement" for the Dalits to tread on. In another poem, entitled "Water," Dhasal comments on how "even water is taught the caste system" in that Dalits are not permitted to draw water from the wells (rural) and public taps (urban) used by higher castes even if extreme summer conditions have dried up the wells assigned to the Dalits. Dhasal highlights the lack of humanitarian feelings among the caste-conscious elites by juxtaposing the anguished plea of a thirsty Dalit:

*"O Lady give me some water, give me some water O Lady
Pour me a trickle, O Lady*

*My throat is parched.
O Big Brother, O village Patil, O Master, O God My
Lord,...”
with the cruel refusal from the upper castes:
Away, away, you daughterfucker,
You fistfucker, you shithead, you jerk, You pedigreed
bastard,
Get away, get away, you block in the way of water.
(Dhasal 45-6)*

Emphasizing the denial of basic civic rights Dhasal urges his fellow Dalits to take up arms against this oppressive caste super structure in his poem, “Man, You Should Explode”

*“Man, you should keep handy a Rampuri knife
A dagger, an axe, a sword, an iron rod, a hockey stick,
a bamboo
You should carry acid bulbs....” (Dhasal 34)*

He encourages his people to demolish all institutions of political society that have only degraded the Dalits and refused to acknowledge them as fellow human beings:

*One should topple down streetlights
Smash up police stations and railway stations
One should hurl grenades; one should drop hydrogen
bombs to raze
Literary societies, schools, colleges, hospitals, airports...
(Dhasal 35)*

An angry Dhasal attempts to galvanize the Dalits to raze all religious norms that aid in dehumanization to the ground:

*One should crumble temples, churches, mosques,
sculptures, museums
One should blow with cannonballs all priests
And inscribe epigraphs with cloth soaked in their blood
Man, one should tear off all the pages of all the sacred
books in the world...
(Dhasal 35)*

Ultimately, Dhasal incites fellow Dalits to “Wage class wars, caste wars, communal wars, party wars, world wars” and “become totally savage, ferocious, and primitive!...and create anarchy” (35) in order to annihilate any form of discrimination exercised by elite state-culture-history sanctioned institutions against the subalterns. Following such cleansing, such removal of hatred and suffering, Dhasal believes, people will be able to:

*“... stop calling one another names – white or black,
Brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya or shudra...
One should share each morsel of food with everyone else,
one should compose a hymn
To humanity itself, man, man should sing only the song of man.
(Dhasal 36)*

At the end of what shocked standardized Marathi literature, Dhasal propagates love and harmony to be shared by all, irrespective of caste, color, and religion, thereby decolonizing the world and “remov(ing) its heterogeneity, by unifying it on the grounds of nation...” (Fanon 10).Dhasal believes that the “differential form of oppositional consciousness and social movement as the methodology of the oppressed can generate a hermeneutics of love...” (Sandoval 10,1).

Dhasal, like Baraka “strike(s) out into the region.... unrepresented and unrepresentable” by the elite, dominant “phrase regimen” by first undercutting and blasting its sterile complacency (Roney 425).In the United States, Amiri Baraka, in his Black Nationalist phase, does not describe the suffering of his fellow blacks in urban USA anymore. Instead, he rouses Blacks to join in the destruction of the “whiteys” who have made living detestable for the blacks (Reader 224). As forthright as Dhasal, in “Black People!” Baraka invokes the treachery of the whites with respect to the flow of monetary resources in USA and instigates the blacks to wrest power from the whites, in one breath:

...money don't grow on trees no way, only whitey's got it, makes it with a machine, to control you youcant steal nothin from a white man, he's already stole it he owes you anything you want, even his life. ... together, let's smash the window drag the shit from in there. (Reader 224)

Baraka refuses to follow (white) standardized English grammar mechanics and successfully undermines the white establishment. He faithfully employs "the crackling and essentially poetic language of the streets" because his poetry is "directed to a black audience" (Lacey 93). Moreover, as argued by Patrick Roney, Baraka "sought an art form that would express the radical, singular ethnicity of African American existence" (407).

In an attempt to revive pride in one's racial heritage and history, one of the first steps to reclaim one's identity from the colonizer/oppressor's grip, Baraka reaffirms the beauty of black people who were rendered helpless in an alien land among alien people in his poem "Ka 'Ba." Baraka writes that "tho we (blacks) suffer, and kill each other /and sometimes fail to walk the air," referring to how black people in the 1960s were viewed by the whites, the blacks have a long history of beauty and creativity that were suppressed and misunderstood in the Americas, and something that contemporary blacks should revive and be proud of:

*We are beautiful people
With African imaginations
Full of masks and dances and swelling chants...
Though we sprawl in grey chains in a place
Full of winters, when what we want is sun.
We have been captured, Brothers. And we labor
To make our getaway.....(Reader 222).*

Without delving into compassion for the degradation of the blacks, Baraka calls for unity among the blacks in his poem, "It's Nation Time." He urges all blacks to join hands because

the “black man is the future of the world” (Reader 240). Tracing the progress from humiliation, from ‘niggers’ and ‘Negroes’ to proud ‘blacks,’ Baraka instigates the blacks to shatter (white) public institutions that have held them down:

*move
 From crushed roach back
 From dead snake head...
 From dancing teeth and coward tip...
 When the brothers strike niggers come out Come out
 niggers
 When the brothers take over the school
 Help niggers
 Come out niggers
 All niggers negroes must change up
 Come together in unity unify
 For nation time
 It’s nation time
 Boom Boom BOOOM
 Dadadadadadadadadadadad
 ...Boom. (Reader 240-41)*

Baraka simulates armed resistance against the white oppressor in his onomatopoeic lines and corroborates Fanon’s understanding of the reactionary readiness among the colonized. Both poets also recognize that the subalterns have “accommodated themselves to the racist [and casteist] system. They have capitulated to colonial subjugation in exchange for the security of a few dollars (meager livelihood through menial tasks) and dubious status” (Carmichael and Hamilton 14). In order to inspire the erstwhile “niggers” to claim their newer selves as fearless Blacks by breaking free of the shackles of racism, Baraka refers to several great spiritual leaders and Gods from across the world who were not white:

*Christ was black
 Krishna was black shango was black
 Black jesus nigger come out and strike
 Come out and strike boom boom...*

*Tear glasses off dead statue puppets even those
They imitate life Shangobudda black Hermes rasis
black Moses Krishna
Black. (Reader 241)*

*Because distinctions based on caste form part of institutionalized Hinduism, Dhasal wants to erase all religious reference in his envisioned world of equality. Dhasal and Baraka demonstrate to their fellow subalterns that their low-caste, polluted, and untouchable identity (for the Dalits) and their inferior racial identity (for the Blacks) are “cultivated by the colonizer (and) may be only an artifact engineered by that imagination to serve its own needs for superiority,” as reminded by Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (Sandoval 85, 6).*

Both poets try to remind their fellow people of their humanity that was eroded by the supremacists, thereby instilling the motivation to embrace violence to make up for generations of helpless emasculation and low self-respect. Carmichael and Hamilton describe the mental climate of the blacks, and the same can apply to the Dalits’ mental make-up in their caste-ridden Indian context:

From the time black people were introduced into this country, their condition has fostered human indignity and the denial of respect. Born into this society today (mid-twentieth century), black people begin to doubt themselves, their worth as human beings. Self-respect becomes almost impossible (29).

The violence Dhasal and Baraka’s works evokes connotes the aggressive and critical questioning of the hegemonic controls. As artists, their writing serves the purpose of creative revolution against mental and physical oppression. We must also remember that Dhasal and Baraka’s poetry articulate the speech of the disempowered in their attempt at empowerment. Nevertheless, while encouraging their fellow people to adopt a militant approach to their oppressors, both poet-activists pay tribute to their ideological gurus, B.R. Ambedkar for Dhasal

and Malcolm X for Baraka. In "Ode to Dr. Ambedkar: 1978," Dhasal enumerates how the Dalit leader challenged caste Hindu hierarchy:

*You were strong enough to uproot mighty banyan trees.
You raised weapons
Not as mercenaries do;
You raised them against injustice.....
All these hollow folk-tales that speak of heaven and
hell, karmic merit and the
burden of sin;
You deprived the 33 crore sucker gods of their business
making their shops empty..." (Dhasal 84)*

Through this poem Dhasal not only pays tribute to Ambedkar but he also reminds his fellow-Dalits of the leader's commitment to reviving their dignity and humanity. By challenging the age-old socio-cultural hegemony of caste, which is as firm and deep-rooted as the banyan tree, Dhasal reminds us, Ambedkar was resolved to shatter the unjust caste system that degraded human beings in order to seek justice and humanitarian rights for his fellow-Dalits.

Similarly, in "A Poem for Black Hearts" Baraka reminds his fellow-Blacks of Malcolm's dedication to the cause of their equality and dignity: "...For Malcolm's /pleas for your dignity, black men, for your life, /black man, for the filling of your minds / with righteousness..." (Reader 218). Baraka refers to Malcolm X's "eyes," "hands raised to bless," "words / fire darts," "heart," and "pleas" that worked relentlessly only to raise the dignity of the denigrated African Americans. Malcolm, like Ambedkar in India, attempted to "rais[e] us (blacks) above our filthy cities" in order to revive self-respect among the blacks and to make them recognize the wrongs the "grey monsters of the world" visited upon them (Reader 218).

Both the poets salute the agents of change these two leaders have been and try to instigate the same vigor, courage, and motivation among the people in order to continue the

leaders' legacies. Dhasal traces the origin of revolt in Ambedkar's work to demanding a radical change in the Dalit condition:

*You let the volcano of revolt become active. Yours was not
a blind revolt.
It was for changing oneself, for changing the world.
New eyes; a new heart.
You believed in awakening; not in terrorizing. (Dhasal 84)*

Similarly, Baraka concludes that Malcolm's agency for change irked the supremacy enough to kill him and silence the demand for change in the black condition:

*...the victor's tireless/thrusts, words hung above the
world
change as it may, he said it, and
forthis he was killed, for saying,
and feeling, and being
change, ... (Reader 218).*

Just as Baraka calls Malcolm a "black god of our time" (Reader 218), Dhasal identifies Ambedkar as one who "created a bend in history that was difficult to achieve – an outstanding feat/ .../You stand shining in front of us./You did not allow us to remain mystified" (Dhasal 83).

Both poets identify a source of empowerment in the two decolonialist leaders. Dhasal and Baraka, ardent followers of their respective leaders and firm believers in justice and humanity, urge their fellow people to embrace the examples set by the leaders and to progress toward self-pride and a new identity. Both poets employ aggressive language to urge their fellow subalterns to rise above their degraded state and complaints and be inspired by the leaders' sacrifices. It is arguable that such employment of aggressive diction and tone reveal a level of frustration with accommodationist and peaceful attempts of earlier generations and the continuing dehumanization of the people. Dhasal proclaims the caste

hierarchy as a chronic disease in India's psyche that must be uprooted in order for the country to progress. While Dhasal reminds fellow Dalits of their equal rights as human beings, Baraka warns his fellow African Americans of the irreversible degradation they will bring upon themselves if they fail to continue Malcolm's example of wrenching identity and pride for themselves from the white grip. Thus, for both poets, the "technique of artistic production...both repeats and destroys the basis of the American[and Indian] experience, indeed by destroying its very status as a universal basis" (Roney417).

Instead of nostalgically appreciating and acknowledging the leaders' contributions, both Dhasal and Baraka employ a bold, belligerent, challenging tone and voice to remind the supremacies that violence is the appropriate weapon of the oppressed and it will be wielded in order to reclaim the dignity of human life, the sole motivation that guided these two remarkable leaders of the oppressed. Both poets create a new idiom of art to address their peoples' conditions Dhasal and Baraka employ hyper-masculine and aggressive imagery to represent their fellow subalterns' repressed rage and to inspire them of the urgency to assume control of their lives and dignity. The forceful wresting of control from the supremacists' grip translates into violent imagery in their works. However, it is important to note that both poets appropriated their groups' women's voices and ignored their contributions or relegated them to the peripheries of the respective social movements. In the larger picture, however, evincing "sensitivity" to the state of the colonized mind, the poets underscore the need for a "mode of perception and decipherment" among the subalterns to realize a "differential consciousness understood as political intervention" (Sandoval 90, 1). Through their poetry they tried to inspire the downtrodden and convince them of the urgency to assume control of their lives and dignity. Both poets also recognize that the subalterns have accommodated themselves to the racist system. As artists their writings serve the purpose

of creative revolution against mental and physical oppression. Their poetry articulates the speech of the disempowered in their attempt at empowerment.

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BOOK REVIEW

Review of Rizio Yohannan Raj's *Exchanges with the Thinker*

JAYDEEP SARANGI

*Those who have heard of the therapeutic effects of poetry, and not experienced it so far, are recommended to read Rizio Yohannan Raj's latest collection *Exchanges with the Thinker*. Most of the poems in this fascinating collection would move your hearts. As they appeal to our senses, we unwittingly follow a call from within. And, we soon become part of their poetic process and together, we move on—the poet and the reader. The book is titled after the eponymous poem which was written before Rodin's 'Thinker in France'. Thinking here is about the process of gathering the courage to cross the border and identifying with 'the other'.*

Here, an indomitable gusto turns the key to a chamber of elevated thoughts. Images are woven one into another with rare brilliance and effortlessness. Rizio does not find it difficult to articulate her poetic matter into a corpus that beautifully invites her reader's interest. No matter what we touch and we wish to know about, we simply end up in the enigma that her words forge. When poets engage themselves with such playful mystery of things, we end to begin reading again. Then, poetry invests life into dry objects and ideas.

The beauty of a poem is born out of a rich sensibility of the mind—a fine poem is a rose that gives a feeling that it holds

something more to open, even as it blooms petal by petal before the reader. A powerful poetic sensibility enlivens even rusty metals and bricks; such imagination is like an intoxicating drop of wine that fuels the flame of creation. And, a lyrical moment of ecstasy follows. It transmits asynthesizing energy to the reader, and brings order out of the disproportionate and disorderly time before the creative moment. The stationed aspirations of the reader are pushed forward, and the poet makes best use of them with her available armoury. All this is true of this collection.

As we gallop from one poem to another in Exchanges with the Thinker, we enjoy a feast of ideas, and Rizio's idiom turns into an multilayered discourse.

This wordsmith has deep seated faith in the wheel of Justice, which may have got stuck for a while leading to the oppression of the powerless, but will turn again to re-establish a just society. In time, and with sufficient effort.

At times, she writes about the potential, and the magic and charm of the female:

*I am a woman; I possess
occult powers to breathe life
into your old coffers of whim. ('Wind', 24)*

Some other times, what concerns her is the creative act itself, which lasts but for a brief moment. Impressions leave their shadows behind. We are all aware of this fleeting habit of beauty. Yet our mind is never satisfied with what it looks for. Now, the carpe diem motto embraces the poet and leaves her sad with what is not:

*Each time roses come
I tell them to stay.
They linger awhile
in a lithe summer dance. ('Each Time', 50)*

“Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement.” says, Christopher Fry. Rizio unfolds her rich casket of images and symbols and the effect is amazement. No matter how comprehensive one’s description aspired to be, there is always a poem that doesn’t quite fit the given parameters. This fuzzy departure from all predictable sets enriches this poetry with a touch of mystery and uncertainty. Possibly, that holds the key to anything beautiful, and that is why poetry is man’s delight. For Rizio, poetry summons imagery, provokes thought, arouses emotion and promotes beauty. It is a painting with words:

*I am a listener.
people come to me with tales
tales
they make me blush,
when they show me my own furies. (Listener I, 109)*

Rizio has the capacity to transcend the purely personal and embrace the non-personal and finally merge with it. While her quest for identity makes her a confessional poet, many of her poems express deep sympathy for bleeding hearts. In contemporary literature by women, the feminine voice largely revolves around a claim for perfect freedom in personal matters, chiefly in relation to love, heterogeneous relationships and sex. Rizio has some poems on these issues and she is comfortable dealing with likeminded concerns. There is an all pervasive sense of hurt and languishment throughout. But love is not a Narcissus here; her mode of expression ventilates the intensity of her varied experiences and webs of thoughts. She is not a poet of wishful nostalgia. Rizio departs from the line of Kamala Das’ nostalgia for the old house and for her grandmother, and makes an idiom of her own. For her, life holds a promise of connection between the outer world and the self. The poems reach across to that specific space where we all reach when we pause and reflect on what our lives mean. All that surround us is ready for the adventure and trust that

would accompany us on our journey. The searchlight she turns on herself is one almost all of us shine upon ourselves at one time or another. Rizio is an engaging read whose bold, honest voice and dignified cadence has re-energized Indian poetry in English with the essential vitamins. The range of her images too is as extensive as her subject matter. Natural imagery obviously dominates this poetry collection, but among these images too she attains considerable depth and breadth and subtle variety. Rizio's immaculate grip over her medium is definitely commendable as it enables her to shift from one realm of human experience to another so seamlessly and effortlessly. She shows us things from new perspectives. Her poems engage us through the multifarious vistas of sensations and break the constructed stereotype, 'biology is destiny'.

Work Cited

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The Dance of the Peacock: Captivating Coruscations

RAJNISH MISHRA

*Instead of assenting to Romeo's "What's in a name?" I must say that there's a lot in the name, especially after experiencing the sensual treat that Dr. Vivekanand Jha's *The Dance of the Peacock* is. Peacock is India's national bird, and for very good reasons. It not only symbolizes the various hues of the rainbow colours of beauty, but also alludes to the rasas that originate in the sahriday after experiencing beauty. Like the captivating coruscations from the spread peacock plumes, this anthology has the rainbow colours of human emotions, thoughts and experiences in it.*

The poets given place in the anthology come from various backgrounds, states and diasporic points of origin. It is, in the true sense of the words, an anthology of English poetry from India. The poems may be said to range over the unending ground of human experiences. Every poem is pregnant with meaning, and many of them may be classed with the best in their genre. It has always been very difficult judging one's contemporaries, especially in the field of poetry. Yet, with a lot of caution, learning from the mistakes of the past: mine and that of others, and placing the caveat lector in the very beginning that my taste is mine alone, and so is my judgement, I dip my metaphorical fingers into the honey bowl and present the same on extraction for the readerly gaze.

I liked many poems in the anthology. In no ordered manner, as they come to my mind, are few lines that spring out from my unconscious:

*“The crocodile body betokens memory foot-steps into
dustbins of glory”
“And yet, down the steps into the water at Varanasi,
where the lifeless bodies seem to grow human”
“I keep mourning all the times
Love-lorn like a serpent
For its lost gem”...*

The process promises to yield my personal hyper-text, and to offer the heady lotos nectar and its accompanying heavenly amnesia. Yet, I can't persist in enjoying and perpetrating this anarchy, for it challenges the most venerated invention of the modern society: personal and private ownership. Coming back to the individual poets and poems then, linear, well defined, segregated by names and endings, I take up randomly the gems of purest rays, to show their beauty in process. I begin with Ananya S Guha's "Dusk":

*Clamour of voices turns down
as dusk descends into a beast.
Colours change.
I love dusk.
I love the beast,
the chameleon of changing colours.*

The imagery acts as a trigger that starts a chain reaction giving rise to stifled or hidden voices of the past: the voices of tradition in which the poem falls loosely, the tradition of amalgamation of thoughts with feelings. The dusk becomes an all devouring beast, in an unconscious, atavistic hybridization of Eliot's brown fog and Yeats's "beast".

The next few lines that come to my mind are from Aju Mukhopahyay's "The Paper Boat":

*The paper boat
I set adrift
In my childhood
On the flooded road*

*Of a metropolis
Has just arrived
This rainy evening
At my doorstep*

Mukhopadhyay's mask of simplicity and plainness works well. It takes in the reader, at least in his first reading, to make him believe in the poem's being some kind of invocation of the Romantic spirit, which it is, in a way. Deeper and more readings reveal layers of significations that the first and cursory one had missed. Then one comes to know the other meanings: intended and unintended. Why declare the ending of a Hitchcock movie? The poem must be tasted again and again to be fully enjoyed.

Charu Sheel Singh's "The Gate Keeper" is one more poem that has stuck somewhere, unknown, yet definitely, in my mind. It has the elements of myths, ready-made and invented by the poet too. The various symbols that the poem uses work at two levels of the tradition of Indian classical symbols and the poets' personally created or used ones too. On a more concretely mythical note, Harish Chandra, the keeper of the gates of the mahashmashan in Kasi that takes his name, is also the epitome of truth in Hindu mythology.

*The nine fold gates into the body
beg for tales that empty their
earth. Harish Chandra the gate keeper
patrols death leading to the shrines
of eternity.*

Jayanta Mahapatra's "Sanskrit" woke me up from my dogmatic slumber. Since having tasted it, my views on the "dead-ness" of the language have changed. There's a strange, sad, slow rhythm in the poem, a rhythm that tends to grow its roots into and around the reader's mind.

*And yet, down the steps into the water at Varanasi,
 ...
 the shaggy heads of word-buds move back and forth
 ...
 aware that their syllables' overwhelming silence
 would not escape the hearers now...*

The alive and special (due to their commonness) images in Kanwar Dinesh Singh's "Oak Trees" make the poem's effect similar to that of a ripe Indian gooseberry that can taste anything, ranging from sweet to pungent, depending on the past memory of the taste buds and also on what is taken after it. His oak tree takes a symbolic form and transcends the limits imposed by time and space, even by its roots. The life power ascribed naturally to the things natural comes in the Indian tradition and the pantheistic Western one too:

*Who says their joints are an arthritic sore,
 And their gravity's owing to the old-age?
 Outwardly they appear to be somber, bore;
 Inwardly each of them is an astute, incisive sage.
 They seldom show up their inner blues.
 Among bullying deodars they stand artfully –
 With warped form, serrated leaves, dual hues,
 They carve a niche for themselves cannily, carefully.*

Mona Dash presents a woman's way of looking at love and that of a man, and, in a way, the difference between a man's and a woman's weltanschauung in her "Love Lost". The poignancy with which the narrator recalls her past: times and love, lends the potency of a mini-dirge to the poem: the dirge of love, life and time combined. The lines that portray the loneliness best are also those that reflect the need to get the old times and love back:

*I think of these questions now
 Long after he has gone
 Now realising that, sometimes*

*There should be no questions
Now worrying that the answer
Has come and gone*

The subtly woven yet strong feminist strands make the warp of the poem and the finely arrayed words its woof.

A very strong and haunting poem of the anthology is Raja Nand Jha's "Poetic Homage" to his beloved, his wife. The power of his emotions is put over the page in the form of words that succeed in touching the reader's soul and making it resonate at nearly the same wave length as that of the poet. He begins with a declaration; an invocation:

*I wouldn't let you die
Till ink's left in the pen
I vow to write on thee,
Please grant it fulfillment.*

The mature muse never lets the reader's interest wane, keeping the parts taut and firmly together. The poem's elegiac note is maintained throughout, yet, it is not a poem of mourning, at least not fully. The bereaved has hope that springs from his love and from his faith. The presence of the lost is so strong that it challenges the material reality, and becomes more real than mere reality.

*Since thou persist
In haunting my memory
I keep mourning all the times
...
Fifty-spring-old in love
And the laceration from its loss –*

Another woman, another poem, but so different: Seema Aarella's "Freezing Fantasy" is in a league of its own. It's very uncommon in its Janus like duality. It's definitely not like the prototypical feminist poems galore that sometimes appear affected poems by poseurs. It's an introspective, personal kind

of a poem that takes one intensely felt experience set in the frame of few moments and converts it into a well wrought poem. In it there's loss again, but the loss is not of someone else. This time round, the poet loses her own self, a part of it at least:

*And the poet within was just about to
Transcend the physical and live greater ecstasies.
But you vengefully rose from the seat,
Drew the curtains over the window
And killed a beautiful evening
With the attribute of a jealous lover.*

Who was it that talked about that room of their own? She was very right. Personal space and time are essential for the creative process and the creator must be allowed to exist as an individual with an independent identity. How can a non-existing entity create? That would be like going one step further from the creation of the world by God: ex nihilo. Because it'd be creation sans creator.

Syed Faizan's "The Book of Life" is reminiscent of Shakespeare's seven ages theme, albeit in a different way. He begins the poem musing philosophically, and very metaphysically too:

*What if each breath that every being e'er took,
Has been recorded in a library;
What if each human were a secret book,
Bound in the covers of eternity.*

He then goes on, posing the problems one'd have in reading such a book. Each age is depicted creating, in its idiosyncratic manner, its own kind of text. And thus goes on the life,

*all life, till the end.
But 'fore we've written all that we would wish,
Death scrawls abruptly in one stroke "finish".*

T. Vasudeva Reddy shows how poetry may still act as a tool for social correction. In a way reminiscent of the great past satirists, he takes up the modern sadhu baba in his "Ashram":

*Saffron robe is his shining mask
to realize his cherished tainted task;
helpless religion falls an easy prey
to his sensual lips that feign to pray;
Brimming with desire his lustful eyes
greet fairer beauties, frail butterflies;*

This new age sadhu has created his own dictionary and the first word he has redefined is the common noun: sage. He is not at all other worldly. His complete attention is on this world, and now. Not for him are the austere and pure ways of the yore, as satisfying his senses is all he desires. Not for him are Himalayan austerities and a secluded ashram, as he wants the best and travels by air only. On his return, his palace of an ashram awaits him. In a Chaucerian portrayal, with all the details so aptly placed at the right places, Reddy succeeds in actually showing the sadhu to the reader. The poem does not end pessimistically though:

*He and his tribe to real sages are a blot,
but dark clouds can never eclipse the sun.*

Khurshid Alam tells the tale of the conversion of nationalism to jingoism and war in just six lines. His well crafted poem "Border" begins with "Each border crafted on the land/ engraves a ditch in the heart". A man made thing that is entirely external and accidental then goes on to make men enemies of one another, as "the divide cannot be unwritten". Alam's "The Sun" stands in complete contrast to his previous poem in its simplicity of theme and treatment of the subject. The way he makes the sun speak for himself is quite remarkable. The poem has to be taken in its entirety to be enjoyed. The sun says:

*You'll see me:
dancing along the streak
of smoke when I take
a flight from the river;*

The poem ends with the sun's going away for the night, with a promise to return. He leaves behind a token that generates trust. It's a "shaft of light / for the night from where I pick up / again the next morning".

And thus may I go on. But then, the reader's autonomy will be compromised. And then, the pristineness of the poems will also be gone. Therefore, I hold myself from touching any more gems in the treasure that Dr. Jha has succeeded in presenting to the reader in his anthology. It'd suffice if I say that I have only skimmed the surface of the vast ocean of contemporary Indian English poetry that this anthology is. I am quite sure that this anthology will be of great service to the connoisseurs, readers, students, researchers of Indian English poetry and will prove a milestone in the rich tradition of anthologies with roots in the Indian ethos.

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INTERVIEW

Talking Publication with Sudarshan Kcherry

**INTERVIEWED BY
SUNIL SHARMA**

*The CEO of the leading **Authorspress India, Sudarsh Kcherry (SK)** is a reticent professional who believes in doing silent work than seeking publicity in these crazy times of unabashed self-promotion. Recent years, he has published many writers and literary collections from his publishing house that have received good critical attention. The first one to recognize overseas writers through his pioneering the Overseas Awards for Excellence last year, he has thus set a high benchmark for the industry that is notorious for ignoring authors. Last year, SK honoured living legend Les Murray; accomplished writer Rob Harle and poet-critic Louis Kastakin from Australia and UK respectively.*

Here, SK, in his first reluctant interview, talks freely on a wide range of issues and gives the perspective of an established publisher with global footprints on writing and publishing. Excerpts:

Q : How do you rate current fiction in Indian English?

A : *Fiction in Indian English is currently in an exciting space over the past couple of decades, Indian English*

Writing has gained prominence at an international stage, especially from the diasporic community with such authors as Jhumpa Lahiri, Salman Rushdie et al. and home-grown authors like Arundhati Roy too have attracted attention through “literary” writing in the canonical sense of the term but I feel it still needs to emerge as a stronger entity. The likes of Chetan Bhagat and young authors providing quick reads set in college campuses have set a resurgence of sorts for reading amongst the general public, though their contribution to standard literary tastes is highly debatable. Having said that, there is considerable new work getting noticed for not just beautiful language, but themes which speak for modern Indian audiences dealing with a plethora of issues, especially pertaining to the urban context.

Q : What about poetry?

A : *Poetry is currently going through a quiet revolution of sorts and as a publisher, I think, it is an even more exciting space than fiction to explore. Unlike Indian English Fiction, themes in poetry currently are deeply rooted in their Indian milieu, and don't attempt to emulate the works of American or British contemporaries. Poetry may not have as many takers as fiction, but there is a lot of material which speaks for the realities of millions of Indians with their numerous concerns.*

Q: What are the themes that appeal most to a publisher?

A : *Universal themes of alienation, loneliness, love, existential crises, familial strife, political conflict, etc., always make for great literature, and they continue to be so.*

Q : What are the novels that are liked by Indian readers in English?

A : *As I had mentioned earlier, the quick reads provided by Chetan Bhagat and others of his ink have really struck a chord with the Indian audience. However more literary works also find a resonance, especially if they manage to garner international awards and prestige.*

Q : Your advice to writers?

A : *The universal advice to writers everywhere, “Know What You Write Best”, when writers try too hard to imitate their idols or write only to impress others the effort shows through as a contrived piece of art, which does not appeal to anybody.*

Q : What is the status of Indian publishing?

A : *Indian publishing is at a kind of crossroads where it needs to decide the course that it is going to take. Should it go ahead with profitable selling and stick to fool-proof books, or take risks and bring forth new, exciting titles to the marketplace? The recent recession, coupled with the arrival of eBooks, has made many publishers cautious, especially niche publishers like me. However, these are challenges one must weather and get through if we need to take Indian publishing to the next level.*

Q : What is the role of an agent in such a market like India where people do not read or buy books?

A : *The agent is often the most critical link, as it is he/she who takes the initiative in bringing forth new voices into the literary field, for instance *The Butterfly and the Bees* started by Sumit Seghal. As such, it is a highly responsible post, and one can thank/curse agents for a lot of writers thriving today!*

Q : Do you think Writing in Indian English really sells?

A : *Of course it does! The question to ask ourselves however is the kind of books we as publishers are willing to invest in.*

Q : How is vanity-publishing viewed by senior publishers like you?

A : *Vanity publishing might enable the author to get his work see the light of the day, but the credibility of the publisher is tarnished. Personally, we don't do vanity publishing, maintaining the reputation of the company is far more important. For smaller presses which don't have the money or the bandwidth to pay for royalties or recoup money from the market, vanity publishing might be a boon, but we have always aimed at carving a niche for ourselves in the academic publishing market, while maintaining profitability. This is why we have always been selective about the kind of books we publish.*

Q : Should not some co-operative ventures exist between a publisher and a writer?

A : *Co-operative ventures which give the author more control over his/her work, whilst giving them the resources of a major publishing house at a fraction of the cost, are a reality in the U.S. and Europe, where technology is at an evolved stage, and where almost everyone has access to new forms of media. In India, independent publishing and small writers are still striving to create their own mark and gain recognition, so it is not a huge priority- legitimization of their work is far more important. Of course as writers and publishers seek to break free of the dominance of major publishing houses and seek to find audiences for their work on their own, especially using social media, this*

may become a reality. But as of now, the entire focus of the business is somewhere else.

Q : Why there are no professional edit agencies here in India? Call them consultants or agents but they are not there. Why this lack of professionalism?

A : *In India, professionalism is in every sphere, but especially in professions involving the creative arts, it takes time to get established. Professional edit agencies are slowly but surely making their presence felt, leading to better work in the market, and I agree that they are a crucial need of the hour. But the recession, and desperate efforts to cut back costs, especially on the part of small publishers finding it difficult to survive, have made that process slow. This will take time, but then we are getting there.*

Q : Why does everybody want to be a writer and win a Booker? Writing is serious business. It is not to be trifled with.

A : *Yes, writing is serious business, and though a solitary activity is not meant for sole consumption / pleasure of the author-a book is meant to be read by the public at large. Also, unlike a lot of other professions / arts which involve public recognition, writing still retains the aura of greater intellectualism and seriousness of thought-in effect, greater status. A Booker or any other prestigious award cements one's standing in the profession, though I agree that it should not be the sole driving force for one to write. Like any other art, laurels and brickbats should be taken as a consequence of one's work, and not the motivation. Unfortunately, the lure of fame and money is too high for some, even when they clearly don't have the talent for decent writing, which has led to a deluge of substandard work in Indian publishing.*

Q : Your take on a best-seller?

A : *Best-sellers help in boosting sales, but the question every publisher needs to ask himself is whether the book they are selling adds to elevating literary tastes.*

Q : Your views on the politics of awards and reviews in top dailies?

A : *The credibility and reputation of a publishing house can be made or marred on the strength of a review from a top daily, and awards only serve to strengthen our sales and profitability. As far as politics goes, especially when it comes to awards, bigger publishing houses have a larger stake in the process, as they have to consolidate their marketing accordingly. For independent publishers like us, a great review in, say, The Hindu Literary Review has a far bigger impact on the sales and reputation.*

Q : Any platform that you want to provide to new writers?

A : *Authorspress has always been welcoming of new writers, especially those who provide a fresh perspective on things. It has always encouraged and published those who want to make a mark for themselves, especially in the rather cut-throat world that is Indian English Writing. Publishing their works is the biggest platform in itself that we can provide them, as it paves the way for them to move onto bigger things.*

Q : Thanks a lot.

A : *Thanks.*

CONTRIBUTORS

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