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POETS AND POETRY

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Chief Editor:

Dr. Vivekanand Jha

Associate Editor:

Dr. Rajnish Mishra

GJPP



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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 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 featured.

In 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 newsletter 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 soothing effect to your creative vision.

**Vivekanand Jha,
Rajnish Mishra &
Chandra Shekhar Dubey**

POETRY

JOHN CASQUARELLI

16th Street Limitations

Language makes us orphans.
Each sound of each word
kills our parents, drowns
our lineage under another
Atlantic watery tomb on
cushions of Oedipal emptiness.

I told my sister this once.
She laughed and said I read
too much Kafka. But, I argued
that I didn't have a Gregor complex,
and not all stories have happy endings
or endings at all, like the young
brown-haired girl who lived on
the dead end block in Fort Lauderdale
near the home of my early childhood.

I only remember one conversation with her
about a butterfly's short attention span.
She asked, "Where do butterflies fly when
they forget where they're going,
and why don't they carry roadmaps
when they're lost?"

Of course, I had no answers to her questions,
and, now that I think about it, those
questions were probably rhetorical.
A hidden inquiry to an unlocked door
in a room where darkness and light mean nothing.

MICHAEL ENEVOLDSEN**A Letter to Nomad of Sunrise**

Dear Nomad of Sunrise
For me as a brother of wolf and ice
These midsummer evenings
On the Island of Easter are magical

It's still light outside
And the blackbird is singing on the roof
My nightingale soul is filled with dusk
This bright, sunny night

Dark clouds in the horizon
Distant flashes of rays beyond the sea
Made me aware that lilies of such skies
Cast light of deep green

Dear Nomad of Sunrise
This time on the Island of Easter
Will enchant my nightingale soul
With magic of the dusk...

SUNIL SHARMA**Yellow**

The gold is growing
These days in the jungle,
Drooping from the stalks
And limbs of the thick bamboo
And other craggy trees, out there
In the open, hardly seen by the others;
Garlands of gold trim and tender,
Tossing and cascading gently,
A minor yellow river flowing downward,
Almost to the carpeted ground,
The bunches of fluttering leaves
Kissed by rough wind, an impatient lover;
Autumn, spreading its many colours,
A sight divine
In the heart of wilderness!

ROBERT NISBET**May**

A sudden gush of spring and May.
Things are a wondrous green.
Fat cattle crop long afternoons.
A cyclist map-reads. Just ahead
the day will promise sun. All day
the hedges heave with leaf.

The winter's gauntness smothered now,
unrecognized. Within
her garden, girl plays solitaire.
Her dark hair flickers in the breeze.
The garden's bramble, gladness, growth.

HARIHAR JHA

The Camera

my fingers slipping from the glass of beer
drunk and happy, overflowing so soon
she had filled up my heart with joy and love
how cheerful! I was on top of the moon

to now beat the silence of loneliness
I do good as I believe in Karma
I am a writer and film-director
work on dazzling light with camera

my heart full of hurt, the camera knows
her lustful eyes on body of my soul
exploits painful memory of my past
gathers images with awful control

prostitution or creativity?
being naked is shameful activity

HARIHAR JHA**My Death**

The Death has drawn a line on me
Mind in blunder, my heart in wonder
I see the death coming near me

Spreading black veil, making me blind
Shaking my bones, and veins are blown
A wave in melody piercing my mind

Song from the birds rolling on a death cup
What clouds reveal, wet fragrance I feel
From earth to cosmos, umbrella opens up

With love I am ready to be breakfast next
Death licking me while I taste my death
My soul is fulfilled but ego perplexed

The world is dissolved, I'm going to die
Nothingness looming and silence blooming
Peace everywhere I'm flying in the sky.

Order from heavens passing my ears
Take me my dear with joy and cheers
People around me why shedding tears?

A. J. HUFFMAN**I Am Perfect**

frame for insanity's glass. My mind
melds into a mélange of migration.
The kiss of every wind has left
me holy and wholly without
reflective tendencies. I see myself
everywhere and nowhere. The ghost
of everything believes me to be
his queen. My crown is made of thorns
not horns. Darkness, it seems, has no desire
to bleed or be me.

ANNE BRITTING OLESON**Revelation**

Laughing, I wake myself at midnight.
The darkness is alive, pulsating,
ribbed with frail bones of moonlight
and I find myself tracing with my eyes
the inward jut of the wall,
recognizing that corner as part of me,
as much as my lungs or heart,
yet something I take for granted like breathing;
and instinctively I know that it—
and the rest of this crumbling house—
is as vital to me as the circulating
of my blood. I wonder, then
if you would recognize in me
the fretful rootless woman
you used to know, who slept lightly
and started at each creak
and whisper of plaster and lathe.
If she is here, she sleeps lightly,
and I do not wish to wake her.

JOHN KROSS**Bicycle**

The autumn sun slides low
against the hours,
peaking over the day
as if barely begun
and almost finished.
There is something familiar
here in the half light,
not quite vertical yet
bright enough to see
the path I ride is not as rough,
the wind is not as strong
and my heart is not as hard
nor encumbered
as days since passed
where in hind-sight
I peddled for sanctuary;
sanctuary from
a morbid kind of half-sight
held tight by a half-life of
loneliness and lies
now long lost
and finally made right.

JOHN GREY**Mice in the Walls**

I spare a thought for the mice
who scramble inside the walls,
from attic to cellar
of our forties' colonial
on this bitter unsheltered night.

As we lie in bed,
I listen, over your complaints,
to their story,
more serious than you could imagine,
a survival that comes with instructions -
find human habitation or perish.

It's always so easy for us.
We watch the sun set and think nothing of it.
We hear the wind howl through the upper branches
and that merely enhances hearth and home.

But the mice are a frantic, real time presentment
of what it means to be resolutely alive,
despite the terrors, despite the enemies at every turn.

You're determined to call pest control
in the morning,
as if what the world needs
is another man at the door
with traps and poisons.

In the interests of peace,
I try to encompass such a man
in this life we have made for ourselves.
I cannot.

POORNIMA LAXMESHWAR**What can be said?**

the green mountains stand firm
consuming the orange sun like an everyday ritual
while the sky is painted in various hues of
pinks, grays, blues I cannot name
the winter warm rays kiss the lotuses goodbye
and the moon prepares itself for the night long show
the birds call for their mates
and the gentle breeze
makes the paddy fields sway in harmony
while so much is brewing around
i turn to him
only to discover him grumbling
about his last finished cigarette...

ALLISON GRAYHURST**Remember**

Remember the end, for it was the ripping open of innocence and fairy hope. It was a necessary falling, a compacting of all the extremities, a slicing off of unworkable dreams.

That end towers within you and remains a pinnacle of freedom. Though freedom is sometimes harsh and cold, it is also the place of only true attachments, and so, there are so few, but enough to sing about. It is worth that year of difficult breathing, worth the reformation of your core. That ending has now ended. You hold your own. You are remade and powerful. Child awoken to the world. Child, still as beautiful as when you were born - ethereal, holier than us all.

VIHANG A. NAIK

A Poem Comes Alive

The
ink

blots
image

after image

where
a poem

injects life
in the rib of words.

VIHANG A. NAIK

Desire

the octopus
of desire
stirs
arteries and veins

tears flesh apart
feeding upon fire
swallowing air

NALINI PRIYADARSHNI**What You Want**

Autumn leaf
Dances its way down
Out of the embrace of
Outstretched arms of the mother tree
And rests lightly on ground
Waiting for the next gust of wind
To take it on the next adventure
Without worrying about
Yesterdays and tomorrows
How's and why's or
What others think
Of its journey

All bondage starts in mind
And ends there too
No one can free you
From anything
Like happiness,
Freedom can only be realized within
To be claimed and lived

Two things you can be, any day
Who and what you want.

PREETA CHANDRAN

First Masterpiece

“Don’t!” I scream,
A little too late,
The deed done,
And an innocent smile,
All over his face.

I look in vain,
At my favourite wall -
A mesh of lines,
And newly learnt letters,
Staring proudly back at me.

This now daily routine,
A favourite with him,
Strangely, but surely,
Ensnaring me,
In its charm.

I admit to his father today,
That I don’t think I would,
Like to repaint this wall;
It is, after all,
His first masterpiece.

SUE BUTLER**Silence**

My silence is a wire mesh, galvanised
and two taut-metres high.
Lightning-bolt signs are everywhere.
You ignore them and climb, expecting
equal and opposite kindness, not
the spark-thump-jolt of defence.
You want and need to believe
it's a mistake. *It's me,*
you call then climb again.

I'll never forget this sizzle
of your skin, charred and flaking
into moths that bang their wings
on the backs of my eyes and lay eggs.
Holes appear. I crouch in one
as you pull the pin from my name.

SUE BUTLER

Corners

I breathe in and out, filling
the world's corners with light.

I breathe in and out, crouching
on a pin's head, careful

to leave space for any angels
who want to dance.

SANKARI PRASAD SARKAR**Verbal Art**

Over centuries ways found by poets are many
to achieve ambiguity, symbolism and irony
through honed poetic diction and euphony
developed by verbal art and its progeny.

Poetry is not simply a verbal art.

It must nucleate in the heart
before it finds its way
to readers and make way
for a greater assemblage
lest it should stay as a craze.

Poetry is not a proliferation
of what appeals to our imagination
or a free flow from our prolific pen
knowing no stop where and when.

Poetry has to reach to the last man
and herald hope as it surely can.
On its way it has to touch our life
and make us rise above our daily strife.

SONALI DALAL**Writings on the sand**

I sit and stare
at the writings on the sand
I try to interpret
language they speak
of someone's dream.

Each letter engraved
in the sand
with its curve and curls
wait for the inevitable
that tide brings on its back.

I sit and stare
as the waves make a dance
crushing dreams in their wake
I feel the loss
as I look at the marks they leave.

I sense the affinity
as I too drew the dreams
on the slate of my mind
I just sat and stared
as my destiny played the game.

TIKVAH FEINSTEIN**Don't Scream, Lady**

He swaggers over to sticks of smoked beef
spreads them on a convenience store counter,
a dark angry-looking white man;
We approach, looking for batteries,
thinking about music,
when an open knife drops to the floor,
fallen smartly from the man's balky coat, and
lies there like an exclamation.

I laugh, looking for the joke.
The clerk behind the counter counts change;
my friend stares at the batteries hanging
in a package of four on a metal hook.
Rage naked on his tormented face, pupils wide and black,
he looms, like in the air.
I move behind Harry; Harry stares
at the batteries; the clerk counts change.

The knife disappears in the rumpled coat, trembling
dirty hands attempt to pick up the meat sticks, they fall
from his clasp over the counter. Hate
distorting his features, sidewise, he locks my eyes.

I know the rules:
Don't tell the clerk or God or
call the police. Don't scream, Lady.
I smile, he turns, disgusted, away.

JACOB ERIN-CILBERTO**A Verse's Claim**

the leaf flutters from a breeze gently
wafting through the pages
of a small poetry book,
read under a tree,
in nature's library

on a sultry July day
spectacles steamed from humidity's bookmark
dog eared dew smearing the print

but the themes shine like a cold sun
in a halcyon blue October sky

immersed in a pool of refreshing words,
diving for riches
the elusive, conducive intentions

a touch of welcomed perspiration
to this reclusive scholar
watching his world turn golden
as he looks up to the surface

from between his bindings.
knowing his seasons are getting shorter
his eyes a bit weaker,
but his propensity for raking up poetic phrases

as fresh as the veins
mining meaning from
a commencing spring.

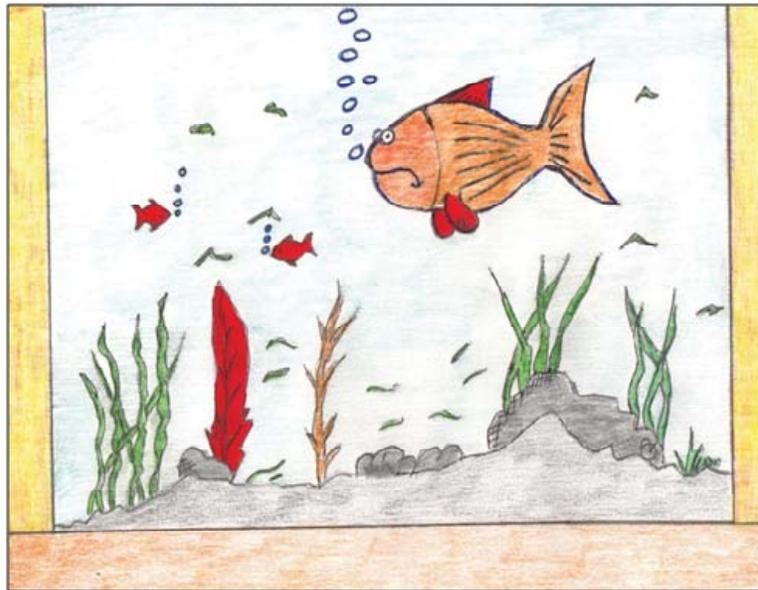
RUTH EGAN

Morning

Ensnoced in grey,
cosy by-the-fire day.
Weak light
spilt over from the night
feigns morning backdrop
while scratch upward branches
claw their way into the fabric.
I sit forever
and look.

G VENKATESH

Safe Bondage or Dangerous Liberty?



They say that they are vegetarians,
and so would not want to eat me.
But they like me in this wretched tank,
for their and their guests' kids to stand and see.
A metre from this wall to that one,
and less than that from bed to ceiling.
I look at the parrot they have in that cage,
and we share a peculiar fellow-feeling.
Just as that bird yearns to embrace the open sky,

I pine for the expanse of the sea,
or at least a lake or a meandering river
where I can live as I was supposed to be.
And if I will be hunted by stork or shark or gull,
I should not particularly worry,
for being safe in bondage,
is not as good as dangers in liberty.

TEJASWINI PATIL

The Splash

As I am
about to lose myself
to the numbness of reality,
the splash
of your memory
awakens me
to the life of the past.

TEJASWINI PATIL

The Present

It's only through you
That
I keep pacing
back and forth
in the time
like
a soft feather
gliding on
the waves of air
to and fro
unless it reaches
a dead end.
The present.

YASHI SRIVASTAVA**Windchimes**

I kept dancing to the tunes
that faded long ago.
I waited for the song to revive
and fill my soul with light,
once more.
I woke up everyday
with a hope to conquer
the unfinished goodbyes
but every night
this unique symphony
played in my dreams.
A song about the one long gone.
Little whispers of that unmatched voice.
It held me tight all through the night,
it chased my mind and captured my heart
but
parched away with each morning light.
That quintessential music.
It left me wanting more
When in reality,
all I could hear was
the impish wind
frolicking with the beguiling
windchimes.

KAUSHAL K SRIVASTAVA**Join Me Face to Face**

In search of happiness I toss up and down
I am neither a poet composing songs
Nor a writer fixing words
For creating an aura of synthetic happiness.

I am neither a philosopher nor a thinker
Roaming in a make-believe imaginary world
I am a simple senior soul
In search of happiness in this real world.

At my age laughter is subdued
It may strain my muscles and fragile bones
A bout of dementia prevents
The recall of joyful past on memory screen
I hardly encounter a pleasant dream
Because of short and sleepless nights.

For senior souls happiness comes
Through talking face to face
Through sharing memories, endless gossips
Light quarrels and thoughtful moments
When we meet face to face
If you agree, join me face to face!

On breakfast table
My friend is a dumb newspaper
While boring monologue goes on TV for ever
In shops, on roads, in gardens and lawns
We hardly talk beyond "Hi and Hello"
Facebook and Twitter look quite hollow.

Faculties are tired, speechless and down
I am looking for friends in the town
Doctors say I have depression
But fail to write a correct prescription.

What I need is a talking face
If you agree, join me face to face!

RUTH SABATH ROSENTHAL**I Ate My Mother's Hair**

standing behind her, as she sat on a stool
in the shower stall of her nursing home bathroom,

tile floor catching silver snippets I cut from
her statue-still head. What could I do

with the comb when I had to wield scissors
with one hand, clasp her locks with the other —

Mother's tangled brain not letting her grasp
that she could ease my task, she could turn

her head when asked, hold the comb and look
in the mirror when I finished, see what

a fine job I did. Every month for seven years,
after each labor of love, I'd stood at the sink

in mother's bathroom trying to rinse her traces
out of my mouth before they pierced my heart more

than I could stand.

AVDHESH S. JHA**You are my beloved**

You, the smile of smiles,
Living at a distance of smile; the life of lives,
My liveliness, and the essence of my living;
You are my beloved.

The taste of Iranian Imli and
The wonder of Ethiopian orange;
The colour of apples of Kashmir and
The sweetness of mangoes of Bihar;
The fragrance of rose and
The essence of scents of Arabia;
You, the smile of smiles,
Living at a distance of smile; the life of lives,
My liveliness, and the essence of my living;
You are my beloved.

The colour of the nature and
The nature of the colour;
The salt of the taste and
The taste of the salt;
The soil of the earth and
The earth for the soil;
You, the smile of smiles,
Living at a distance of smile; the life of lives,
My liveliness, and the essence of my living;
You are my beloved.

The radiance of Sun and
The light of the world;
The crescent of the moon and
The twinkle of the stars;
The height of generosity and
The eraser of the burden of my adversity;
You, the smile of smiles,
Living at a distance of smile; the life of lives,
My liveliness, and the essence of my living;
You are my beloved.

K. S. SUBRAMANIAN**Aging and what it Means.....**

Years pass without a whiff of murmur,
clouds dissipating in the sky;
If happiness is a whirlpool in the river
Pain too is a fading scar on memory.
Voices jar on the wavelength,
a perpetual melee daunting the ear.
Once the cacophony peters out,
emerges the calm cadence of order.
Life is never a bouquet to the living,
a surprise always on the fringe;
Beyond the rim of stinging chaos
Hope beckons, a distant rose?

YUAN CHANGMING

Spiritum

As I meditate under the morning glow
All my scattered proto consciousness
Gathers together
Slowly, slowly
Piece by piece
At the bottom of a black hole
To re-present itself
Like a mounted arrow
Ready to shoot
At the setting sun

YUAN CHANGMING

Icicle

Hold it in your hand
And your intimacy will
Make it melt
Into self-oblivion

Catch it like a bird, or
Throw it towards the sun
And it will fly into the sky
Vanishing in total self-loss

**Discovering Divinity in Self:
An Analysis of Vivekananda's
"The Song of the Sannyasin"**

PRASHANT MAHAJAN & PRAGYAA GUPTA

"... The famous argument of Descartes, 'I think, therefore, I exist', can be remembered. Nothing is indubitable in this universe, except the fact of Self existence. Vedanta reverses this statement : I exist, therefore I think...." (Tathagatananda, *The Concept*)

Vivekananda, through his philosophical lectures brought before the world the universal spiritual values that help one to understand the manifestation of divinity in self. Many know Vivekananda through his eloquent lectures but the splendor of his poetic personality is known to a few only. The soul, wounded by carnal desires, feels the balmy touch of the supreme self through his poetic utterances. His poems reveal the aesthetic experience of a poet and the spiritual urge of a saint due to which a person, regardless of his/her cult and creed, finds solution to his/her spiritual queries.

A strong current of Vedantic thoughts can be felt in Vivekananda's poems which incites the readers to know the real purpose of our existence. These poems are powerful enough to create a higher plane where one can feel the oneness of the universe with the self. His search for the true self is actually a

consciousness that brings forth the divinity hidden in each person of the world. To unveil this true self and to understand poet's philosophy behind the poem, "The Song of the Sannyasin" is the aim of the present paper.

The title, "The Song of the Sannyasin" suggests an idea about the content of the poem. A song literally means the poetry that is, "Simple, sensuous and emotional" (*Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 190). Through a song a poet expresses his/her personal thoughts or feelings. Sanyasa is a Sanskrit word, "... a tripartite compound of sa- [which] has 'collective' meaning, ni-means 'down' and asa is form a root 'as, meaning 'to throw' or 'to put', so a literal translation would be 'laying it all down."

Thus, "The Song of the Sannyasin" means the expression of inner feelings of a person who urges his soul to throw down all the carnal desires and gain consciousness for the attainment of that knowledge of self which is eternal, indeterminate and omnipresent.

It is difficult for a materialistic person to understand this self for self generally means an essential part of a person's nature which makes him/her different from everyone else. "... The self makes a person as a distinct individual; it is the object of one's own reflective consciousness" (self-knowledge) This individual self represents finite, small consciousness where as Vedantic self that Vivekananda talks about in his poem, is beyond intellect, mind and ego. This, "Self is eternal, immortal, infinite consciousness, one and non-dual. It is transcendental as well as immanent entity." (Tathagatananda, *The Concept*).

The present poem is a dramatic monologue where the persona teaches himself the ways of Sannyasin. Thus, he yearns to have knowledge of truth that cannot be tainted by worldly desires. He threw away all the bonds that binds him to this dreamy world and moves forth to spend his remaining life in spiritual contemplation in a deep forest. Lust, fame and desire are known to him as fetters, hence he exclaims, "Know,

slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free/ For fetters though of gold are not less strong to bind” (12-13). Pleasures of this world are not for a person who walks on the path of truth. To know what is beyond this world, one has to relinquish the facilities of life. Vivekananda throws light on relationship between pain and pleasure in one of his lectures delivered in America:

“... Few men know that with pleasure, there is pain, and with pain, pleasure; and as pain disgusting, so is pleasure, as it is the twin brother of pain Both should be turned aside by men whose reason is balanced (*Realisation*, 11-12)

Life is full of temptations which an ordinary human being cannot resist, these temptations knock the senses and then senses give them way to heart. The hope to live a little more takes a man away death. It never allows him to rest in peace. Moreover, there is no end of desires that according to Hindu philosophy, takes the soul from one body to another and the thrust is never quenched but, the Sannyasin, after realizing the real self, finds, “This thrust for life, forever quench; it drags/ from birth to death and death to birth, the soul” (18-14). The Sannyasin’s only intention is to gain redemption which can only be gained through the knowledge of that supreme, luminous ‘self’. He does not want to conquer this world for he knows that in this worldly conquers lies his real defeat.

Relations of this world are dreamy, man lives in dream throughout his life. The speaker in the poem suggests, “They know not truth, who dream such vacant dreams”(30). Truth is beyond intellect, mind and ego. All search for truth in temples, books and rituals are vain because it is not external but internal, it lies in the hearts of our heart. It is this truth that the poet talks about, “There is but one – The free – The knower – self! /without a name, without a form or stain” (37-38).

When a person knows this truth he/she acquires a perfect equanimity towards everything around him/her. In this state

he/she has no further need of either mortification or religious observances. The Sannyasin realizes the impersonal self-existence; the Brahman and hence develops no offence for anyone. No greed, no lust reside in him, he is not at all worried about the reward of his Karma as he knew thinking one as Karma-body means to "wear a form" (25), and wearing a form means to "wear the chain"(26). Thus, he talks about the emancipation of soul and depicts:

Head then no more how baby lives or goes, its task is done. Let Karma float it down; Let one put garlands on, another kick This frame; say naught. (56-59)

Truth cannot be realised till a man thinks of himself as a body. Knowledge of the real existence has to be achieved through strenuous spiritual struggle for the knower here is united with that which is known. The world is replete with beautiful things but that is not the way to see God. God is infinite and it is this infinity that this Sannyasin searches in himself, knowing which all pains and miseries vanish.

Persona in the song well knows that the path he has chosen is not an easy one. Thus, after every stanza he repeats:

... Sannyasinbold! say-
'Oh Tat Sat Om!' (8-7)

He is aware of the play of Maya that obscures the path of truth and draws one again and again back to the materialistic world. But one who is determined to know the truth gains control over his senses, comes out of the shackles of Maya, and prays to God until at last his soul is free from its fetters and absorbed into the atman, the impersonal self-existent Brahman. This is the state that the Sannyasin of the poem wants to attain, where through his consciousness (chit) he can become aware of his real existence (sat) to enjoy the permanent bliss (Anand). Thus, he repeats "Om Tat Sat Om!" Where 'Tat Sat' means the "only real existence" (In search of God-5), and 'Om' is "... the most potent indicator of the divine consciousness" (Self-

knowledge). Thus, “Om Tat sat Om” means the consciousness of that divine self which is impersonal, omnipresent and is the only real existence.

Walt Whitman also observes ‘Self’ in the “Song of Myself”, where he magnifies the self and glorifies the senses in his progress towards union with the Absolute. Whitman’s self is multi-layered; he observes body as the only way the soul can function in nature. Thus, he fulfils the urge of flash, finds his self merging with the others, enjoying and struggling with them, yet he knows that ‘I’ or the real ‘Self’ in him is free from sufferings, pains and desires. Vivekananda’s idea of ‘self’ is based on Vedanta which urges a man to leave every desire for knowing the ‘Self’ does not simply mean intellectual assent, it means realization, it is this realization that frees the soul from burden of life and death, it is the state of consciousness of the real existence, where one achieves the permanent bliss.

Through the single poem Vivekananda explained the idea of Vedantic ‘Self’, knowing which nothing else remains to be known. The ‘Self’ that Vedanta talks about illuminates everything and is not illuminated by anything else. It is this ‘Self’ that one has to realize until, Vivekananda adds:

... it become bone of your bows and flash, until all the hideous dream of littleness, of weakness, of misery, and of evil, have entirely vanished and no more than can the truth be hidden from you even for a moment.
(*Realisation*, 74)

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Meera – The Devotee and the Lover

DR. PAYAL KISHORE TRIVEDI

*Mere to girdhargopal
Dusarona koi
Jake sir mormukut
Meropatisoi*

The verse immediately reminds of the Rajasthani poet saint Meerabai. The *Bhaktipadas* (devotional poems) of Meera have gained immense popularity among the Indians and have attained the elevated status of *bhajans* or religious hymns/paeans dedicated to lord Krishna. Similar to the poet Narsih Mehta of Gujarat, Meera has earned the adulation and respect as a Krishna devotee. In the genre of Indian literature, the poetry of Meera, has attained huge prestige and has been regarded as the classical heritage of the country. Nonetheless, as the above stanza indicates, the popular image of Meera as a Krishna devotee is also coupled with her image as a Krishna lover which is a queer paradox that blurs the stereotypical binary opposition of the sacred and the amorous promoted by the proponents of rigid social morality. This paper attempts to highlight the confounding duality in Meera's approach towards *Krishna as a lord and as a husband* which often remains sidelined because of her magnificent image as a devotee promulgated far and wide by the proponents of the *Bhakti* movement in India.

Meera's proclamation of Lord Krishna as her husband becomes a matter of speculation because she renounced the world as an ascetic while she identified her lord in the worldly terms. Despite being married to Rana Bhojraj of Chittor, Meera completely denied the precepts of marital life and yet she chose

to adulate lord Krishna as her husband. This paradox certainly becomes a matter of deliberation. The fusion of love and devotion is not an alien concept in Hinduism. The *Shivalingam*¹ or the phallic emblem of lord Shiva is generally identified as the insignia of the union of *purusha* and *prakriti* or masculine and feminine elements in the worldly as well as the metaphysical sense. In his monologue *Flowers*², Girish Karnad highlights this immensely complex conception of love in Hinduism when he makes the priest of a Shiva temple fall in love with a concubine and decorate her with the same flowers he uses to adorn the *Shivalingam*. The monologue strikes significant parallels between the concubine and the *lingam* which reminds the story of Shiva's relationship with a prostitute noted in the *Maha Shiva Purana*.³ Many proponents of Hinduism deny accepting that this Shiva is the same Shiva worshipped in the Hindu temples. Nonetheless, the account does create dubiousness around Shiva's image that remains immune to the tenets of conservative outlook. This ambiguity about Shiva in fact is an evidence of the profound mystery in Hinduism which dismantles all social stereotypes. Similarly, the perspective of the Hindus regarding the love affair of Radha and Krishna has always been elusive. Worshipped in almost every nook and corner of India, Radha and Krishna are looked upon with reverence as lovers. It is popularly stated that the couple shared an otherworldly relationship and that their love was beyond any physical attachment. There are innumerable stories of Radha Krishna's platonic love affair but in some parts of the *Vrajabhoomi* - Gokul, Mathura and Vrindavan etc., we do find tales of Radha and Krishna's marriage having taken place. Bhandirvan⁴ is a place where the idol of Krishna is seen putting vermilion in Radha's hair and thus fulfilling the rites of marriage as per the norms of the Hindu religion. It becomes interesting to see that in the Nidhivan⁵ of Vrindavan, (where I happened to visit in 2012); it is believed that Radha and Krishna spend their private hours in a room all night after the rasalila (divine dance of love) gets over. Radha is worshipped

here as the bride of Krishna and the devotees of Nidhivan offer the entire collection of bridal ornaments, clothes and make-up etc., to Radha as an offering with which the deity could beautify herself during her stay with Krishna at night. This tradition is being carried on since eons and without any candid testimony whether Radha actually wedded Krishna, countless followers of the Hindu religion believe in the love of Radha and Krishna touting it as exemplary of a sanctimonious relationship. Such examples certainly disregard the rigidity that the proponents of bigotry in the Hindu religious terrain have shown by distinguishing the sacred and the amorous categorically. As a result, it may be derived that Hindu religion does not show a clear-cut aversion towards love as a worldly feeling and therefore perhaps, the sacred image of the *shivalingam* signifies the union of the phallus and the vagina denoting the man-woman or *purushaprakriti* in the earthly and the transcendental sense signifying the divine Shiva-Shakti union. As the physical blends with the metaphysical in the emblem of the *lingam* almost inseparably, it may be inferred that earthly love is a sublime manifestation of the metaphysical union of the masculine and the feminine. This implies that there is an inseparable intrinsic divinity latent in the emotion of love which can be experienced only by a renunciation of its understanding as a banal physical concept. In Meera's proclamation of her love towards Krishna, there seems an allusion to this transcendental aspect of love unfathomable through myopic conception of earthly man-woman relationship. Her adoration for Krishna enlightens the illumining aspect of love that could lead towards redemption or *mokshaprapti*.

Hinduism regards four *purusharthas* or ways of life as mandatory ways of living. *Dharmaarthakama* and *moksha* or the final state of blissful union with the divine. The philosophy of *Jiva* is *Shiva*⁶ in Hindu religion is propagated widely signifying the indivisibility of the human soul and the supreme soul (*atma* and *paramatma*). It is believed that *Jiva* or human

soul seeks *moksha* or liberation which puts an end to the continual cycle of birth and death. Therefore, most enlightened spiritual philosophers endorse the realization of the oneness between *jiva* and *Shiva* and thus promote the distancing with the material self in order to gain the highest elevated state of blissful union with the *paramatma* or god. In almost all Meera's poems, it becomes apparent that the devotee of Krishna had attained the realization of the futility of the worldly attractions and was craving for the sublime union with her lord forever. She disregarded all her marital obligations and went from place to place as a nomad only to reach her final goal to let her soul attain *moksha*. Therefore it can be concluded that Meera's *bhakti padas* in the honor of Krishna are oriented towards negation of the earthly attachments reflected in these lines:

Karnaphakiriphirkyadilgiri
Sadamaganmairehnaji
Koi din ghodi koi din bangla
Koi din jangalbasnaji

The belief in living an abstemious life clearly projected in the above verse is also reflected in another famous poem of Meera which is a veritable example of her denial of the material enticements:

Payojimaine ram rattan dhanpayo
Kharachnakhootchornaloote
Din dinbadhatsavao
Payojimaine ram rattan dhanpayo...
Meerakeprabhugirdharnagar
Harakhharakhjasgayo...

The verse undoubtedly reflects Meera's complete rejection of transitory wealth of the mortal world and the recognition of the perennial wealth of devotion that can be obtained by the name of god. This is indeed advocacy of the ascetic mode of worship. However, while bolstering abdication of the worldly life as an enlightened soul, Meera's choice to identify lord

Krishna in worldly terms as her husband may perhaps be understood as her way of dissolving the distinction between herself and god. Meera's proclamation of Krishna as her husband dissolves the cliché image of god presented in most religious doctrinaire's as a majestic being who can only be worshipped through formidable rites and rituals. Her Krishna was not the awe-inspiring lord of the grand temples but instead a simple down to earth lifetime companion who was perpetually ready to protect her and come to her rescue when she needed his help. Popular legend goes that Krishna saved Meera's life by destroying the effect of the poison she readily consumed as per the royal orders. The instance proves the actual nature of Meera's proximity with Krishna- her loved one. It may be assumed that perhaps Meera had already attained that heightened state of elevated oneness of *Jiva* and *Shiva* while remaining in the mortal world. This is true of almost all saints and enlightened preceptors of the *Bhakti Marga* like Eknath, Tulsidas, Raidas, Sur das Narsih Mehta et al for instance that experienced the state of inseparable union with their lord even while they stayed in the mortal world. Thus, Meera's perception of Krishna as her husband evidently disregards the preconceived notion that worship for god cannot be expressed in worldly terms. This is clearly articulated by the poet in the lines "*Aeri Main to Prem Diwani Mera Dardnajane koi*"

To sum up, Meera's love for Krishna is a subject matter that certainly requires a profound understanding of the concept of devotion expounded in the *bhakti marga*. However, it is apparent that in the contemporary times, this ancient poet assumes great significance as her poetry dismantles the conventional bifurcation of love and devotion and thus exposes the narrow-mindedness of those who restrict man-woman love to the amatory level. Her choice to express her devotion in the worldly terms as '*Prema*' or 'love' reveals that she was ahead of her times in selecting the road not taken i.e. undermining the precepts of conformity. Moreover as love, an earthly feeling

brought her closer to the almighty it ceased to remain a worldly emotion but became a transcendental experience and so she renounced the material attractions and advocated worship. However, her choice of addressing her lord as her husband also may be interpreted as her denial to abnegate the worldly emotion of love which proves that she was an enlightened soul who knew that feelings cannot be estranged from a human being till the time one lives life. Nonetheless, she channelized the mortal feeling of love towards the path of devotion which made her what she's known today- Saint Meerabai. This alludes to the precept regarding the control of senses advocated by most spiritual doctrines as the ultimate way to attain moksha. *Kathopanishad*⁷ has a verse explaining the role of the intellect in regulating the sensory feelings personified by the refractory horses. It can be inferred that Meera's proclamation of Krishna as her husband that made her infamous amongst her community was evidently a total negation of the acceptance the worldly identity as a King's wife. She aimed for a transcendental union with the god - the *jagatpati* and not with a *pati* or an earthly being and this was obviously an alliance beyond the physical understanding of a man-woman relationship. In the eyes of the ordinary folk, this was escapism from moral duty but Meera knew she was dutiful towards the one who could enable her to cross the circumference of mortal living forever and attain salvation or freedom from the cycle of life and death. This higher aim seems to be the target of Meerabai's poetic declaration "*Mere to girdhargopaldusrona koi jake sir mormukutmeropatisoi...*" She appears both; a devotee as well as a lover thus two supposedly antithetical emotions affection and devotion come together in her poetic offerings to Krishna and creates an apparent paradox which may perhaps be comprehended if the stringent rules of morality and the outdated social beliefs are revised. In this sense, Meera's poetic verses dedicated to Krishna appear more than simply *bhajans* or hymns dedicated to the lord. The poems are a paradigm of contemporary literature that rejects prejudiced outlook and

promotes a heightened goal of life devoid of material attachments. This blend of contemporary relevance and philosophical significance attests the perennial pertinence of Meera's divine poetic compositions and stimulates an in-depth study of her seemingly contrasting image as a devotee and as a lover.

Notes and References

1. Shivalingam is a representation of Lord Shiva worshipped in the temples. Lingam is represented alongside the yoni a symbol of the goddess Shakti. The union of lingam and yoni symbolizes the union of masculine and feminine principles.
2. *Flowers* is a monologue written by Indian playwright Girish Karnad. It depicts a temple priest's confession of his guilt of having fallen in love with a prostitute and having decorated her with the same flowers he uses to decorate Shivalingam. The monologue questions the stringent precepts of morality that deny a man the right to express his sensory desires and burden him with the onus of retaining social prestige.
3. *Maha Shiva Purana*, Deevalila section, Shata Rudra Samhita chapter 26 adds an interesting facet to Shiva's personality as it describes that Shiva appears in the disguise of a Vaishya or merchant and spends three days and three nights with a concubine Mahananda of Nandigram who was his staunch devotee.
4. Bhandirvan is believed to be the place where Radha and Krishna's marriage took place as per Garg Samhita and Gita Govinda.
5. Nidhivan is the most mysterious and sacred place of India situated in Vrindavan. It is believed that Radha and Krishna still appear there along with the Gopis and perform Rasalila every night. The temple is closed in the evening and no one is allowed to enter its premises after that. It is also believed that anyone who happens to encroach upon Radha and Krishna's privacy to see their Rasalila/ divine dance either loses his senses or dies a fatal death.
6. Jiva is Shiva is a popular Hindu philosophy. It means god recites the living entity is a manifestation of the supreme god. As per Ramakrishna Paramhansa, "Wherever, there is living being, theirs is Shiva".

7. The following verse of Kathopanishada describes mind as the controller of the refractory horses personifying the uncontrollable human senses:

...Know thou the intellect as the chariot driver,

And the mind as the reins.

The senses, they say are the horses; the objects of sense, what they range over.

The self combined with senses and mind

Wise men call the enjoyer. He who has not understanding.

Whose mind is not constantly held firm- his senses are uncontrolled, like the vicious horses of a chariot-rider.

(Vatsyayan 22-23)

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**The Spiritual in Jaydeep Sarangi's
Latest Poetry Collection *From
Dulong to Beas: Flow of the Soul***

SUNIL SHARMA

Spirituality is a legacy left behind in the English poetry by the venerable William Wordsworth and other Romantics. The trend caught on worldwide and arrived in regional literatures in our country by the second half of the last century. In Hindi, it was called *Chayawaad*.

In poetry written in English by the Indians, its traces are faint. Most of such writing is heavily West-oriented and preoccupied with their vocabulary and idiom. The elite writing in this lingua-franca explored urban issues and even today, most of the famous writers writing in a curious dialect called Indian Writing in English (IWE) —it went by different names earlier—is still stuck in Mumbai, Bollywood, Delhi, Amritsar, Darjeeling or Kolkata.

You do not find any Indianness in these finely-crafted pieces of writing done for a largely foreign audiences and Anglo-American media. For finding unique flavor of region, local spaces and spices, you have to read the Bhasha Sahaitya—very rich and evocative and mirror-like. And you find evidences of the spiritual in this literary space. Spiritual, as a deep yearning for the beyond. The beyond of the ugly, tangible, material. A desire to re-connect with the river, the cloud, the bird-song, the valley and see a divine pattern in these things. For the others, it is just natural phenomena you pay to see through a cottage on a hill in an exotic resort.

For poet Sarangi, poetry is a means of reclaiming the lost territory...of spirit, of the lost Wordsworthian legacy, of recovering the faculty of finding the sacred in nature.

His latest collection—already making waves worldwide—is a fine example of the yearning for the deep, the spirit, the realm beyond the immediate and reach that mysterious dimension granted to few blessed souls only.

And you find the traces that electrified poets of the yore...in this mesmerizing collection of great poetry by Sarangi. First, about the much-talked-about book and then, a bit of creative engagement with select texts therein.

The slim book is a 71-page poetic document of the extraordinary journeys both mundane and metaphysical undertaken by the celebrated bi-lingual young poet. In fact, these are the rare visions granted by forces beyond the pale of the physical or the rational realms to the blessed few; stark visions that hover over the misty in-between regions of the immediacy and the meta-physical. They both familiarize and de-familiarize the everyday; the intensity of the felt immediacy is transformed into remote, almost exalted glimpses of truth, poetically conveyed to fellow travellers keen to map out this topography of human soul—a mixture of both earthly and divine. Jaydeep Sarangi, through this slim volume of lyrical meditations, seer-like, discharges a role denied to lesser poets: A soul-maker. It is his coinage but very apt: A poet has the capacity to recover the visions given to early seers who all were poets and early poets who were all seers. Great poetry is a valiant attempt to re-claim that lost territory, the magical country situated somewhere between desert and snowy mountains, seen by a striving mind only.

His poems here capture the gaze of the spirit directed towards the intangible. And find nirvana in these things retreating far away from a purely materialistic world dominated by bonds, profits and goods fancy.

Look at this simple assertion of a voice in trance-like situation:

Life Beyond

All morning I sat at the arm chair
Hands folded and ponder over limitless waste,
Ratanbabu's ghat falls flat
Between the mundane and the metaphysical.
A clarion call
From somewhere takes me to strange part of life
Where I am the instrument among living divides.
I remain, as the crow
Time keeper for oral narration
For centuries to come. (Emphasis added)

Poiesis is, on the evidence of the Ancient Greeks, making/creating something. In the celebrated **Symposium** recorded by Plato for the post-modern, rational skeptics like us who spout agnosticism about the possibilities of the other worlds seen by the likes of Homer or Hesiod, Diotima speaks of the three poiesis: natural, urban and in the soul through a careful cultivation of virtue and knowledge. Highest priority is accorded to third one by the priestess in this Socratic dialogue. This distinction is crucial template for any maker of Beauty in these strife-torn times: Human soul, in poiesis process, can attain a heightened awareness of the divine—the illuminating site of the virtuous and logos, the ultimate enlightening experience. Poetry symbolizes that ascent through the phenomenal world to the spiritual. A poet must constantly strive for the spiritual contained in the mundane—very much like the Silenus statues. Jaydeep does that for a whole culture of instant gratification and quick, deliberate amnesia engineered by the merchants of mass market. He is poised delicately over the dross and the divine in his wanderings as a poet with X-ray eyes and inquisitive mind, deconstructing the power narratives, reversing roles, desperate for a conversation. His empathies are for the deprived and the downtrodden, a rare

province for the poets of Indian English, more worried about the calibrated response of the Guardian to their Booker-nominated novels soaked in drug-haze than the plight of the fellow Indians in an abject caste system that power elite does not want to dismantle for the expediency of the vote politics:

If I Were A Down Trodden

To remain harsh,
blunt I stare back.
Your empathy soaks my pregnant womb.

I follow footprints of incredible Jogis, I wonder.
Heartless coward in me
Steps back;
Buried alive.

I visualise life at a distance
Not caught in nagging time—
I could be a downtrodden!

But his message is uplifting. Through a careful weaving of racial memory, history, current politics, naturalism, cultural references, Sarangi creates a powerful concoction:

Living Alone

(A poem dedicated to dalit writers of West Bengal)

Sad wings twitter
as my body surrenders
in the snow peaks of Rotang.

I am more strong than ever
I touch the blue sky
And I remember what I loved!
You blame me as 'weakness'.
I bounce back with my white dress
On the banks of river Beas.
No matter what I do
I experience the ultimate
In the sad terrace of my Kolkata home.

The ventilator blocks
Air from outside
As my wife wishes me on bed!
I read letters of Swamiji
And take lessons from my dearest one
Near scenic Beas.
I remember
How Kalyani ,Meena and others
Through hard labour and strength within
Fight for their right.
They write
As they have no arrow to lift.
My lonely inside
Whispers in a lonely midnight street
When no bird sing and no priest chant.

Or, look at this strange blend, mixing desire with memories:

Sap in History

The sap is my nation
History of the land;
How my forefathers settled
On the bank of *dulong*.
These green fields
These castles of mud and goats
All I owe.

I remember my first day
At school
That was the last.
My father got me a youth of ten
And my love ended on bed.

I sit near the bank of *Dulong*
And whisper in love lost
Like long trees in autumn
Barren as history books
Where dry hard thoughts
Write their names in black ink.

Alcohol connected
In a finer tune near muddy rain water.
Suddenly, green turf turned greener.

All these are the creations issuing forth, bringing forth in the classic Martin Heidegger sense of poiesis: Changing the stasis into ecstasies. Jaydeep Sarangi, in his cult book, *From Dulong to Beas*, successfully captures the essence of the Indian experience in all its complexities. Whitman-like, he hears India singing, and, records some of the precious glimpses afforded to a soul attuned to such ethereal whisperings from rolling landscapes and temporal shifts in a geography going back to Vedic times:

Your Bed!

You crawl on the bed
between stretching hands
And lay all alone and drink.
Sleeping pills pile up in the stomach.

A lion looks like a king
In a cage of Patkai-Naga Hills.

My bed is a fossil
Which was true some years back,
In history.

There are journeys outside the immediate framework also. In a sense, it is a search for meaningful alliances in shifting landscapes located within the context of globalization. It is a way of reaching out, to renew tired clichés, to retrieve the lost narratives.

In this sense, Sarangi is indeed a unique soul-maker: He renews our chipped souls running after the tangibles and makes us aware that real wealth lies inside a beautiful soul, not outside. In this sense, he is a real maker of new aesthetics for the Indian poetry in English.

MEMOIR

Memoir Excerpt

GARY LANGFORD

*(Chapter 3 – the relevance here is the reason I went to
Australia to become a teacher writer)*

*Words have a mind of their own,
Tumbling out before you can stop them,
Able to get you into trouble,
Just as much as they can save you.*

In late January 1974, I visited the inspector of secondary schools at his office in the middle of the city near Cranmer Square where I had spoken at a ceremony on the death of the poet, James K. Baxter, in 1972. I knew every English secondary teacher graduate in my year of training got jobs teaching English, except me.

The inspector invited me into his office with a handshake and a welcoming smile. He remembered seeing *Quartet*, my first television play that also won the Dame Ngaio Marsh Playwriting Competition, resulting in my initial flight on a plane when I was taken up to Auckland to meet the producers. ‘Someone of your background, along with a flair for writing and the stage will go down well in education,’ he told me.

Quartet was one of the first plays in colour on New Zealand television. It is the story of two females (played by Margaret Blay and Tina Grenville) who load a murder (viewers

never saw the body under the bed) on to a drunken male (played by Gilbert Goldie). He wakes up to find he remembers nothing about killing the pretty girl's former boyfriend in self-defence. The women twist the web around him until he cannot get out, believing he needs their support to get him off a murder charge.

The inspector made a phone call for a teacher's job on my behalf, giving me the thumbs up sign as he was talking. I was given a vacant English teaching job that he had told me about at Riccarton HS. I did not even know there was a vacant job, let alone why I was forgotten when it came to being given one as the only unemployed English teacher in Christchurch. 'Schools,' he had murmured when I had asked him the question before he made the call, almost as if he was agreeing with me.

My new job, however, was so short I never actually did anything, apart from sitting in a chair. I set the Guinness World Record for the Shortest Teaching Appointment. The inspector mentioned my name, and I was no longer offered the job. I could see him frown. He asked, 'why,' to be informed I was considered, 'very qualified, but far too radical by the head of English at Burnside HS.'

'Sorry,' he said to me as he put the phone down. 'The job was kind of promised to a former student of the school, even if she has yet to finish her BA degree.'

I could tell he sympathized with me, but he also regretted making the call on my behalf. 'How do you appoint an untrained teacher?' I asked.

'She'll be a part-timer until she finishes her training,' he answered, looking guiltier than a liar who blushes, looks sideways, trembles and still expects to be believed.

'She must be brilliant,' I said sarcastically.

'It's ...'

'Protocol,' I finished.

‘Exactly.’

Apparently my sarcasm helped the inspector. I tried to push him in another direction. ‘How does being unofficially blacklisted by a school department head have any weight behind it? Isn’t a school inspector more powerful?’

‘Normally,’ he said, wringing his hands as if he was trying to wash what had suddenly become a problem away. ‘The head of English at Burnside is also on the English committee of high schools for the region.’

‘What’s that got to do with the price of fish?’

‘It’s all a trifle delicate if you see my point.’

I didn’t want to see his point, but I thanked him before leaving his office to go home to my place in Andover Street, walking along the banks of the increasingly muddy river of employment. I was beginning to think I would need to pick up bits and pieces of casual teaching outside the city where I was surely the unknown, but highly qualified and available.

I was right. Early one morning I drove south to Lincoln HS (barely an hour from Christchurch) in my battered Austin A40 with a noisy exhaust that tended to wake people up from sleep in alarm, suspecting someone had blown up their letterbox. The next piece will show you why a department head of little imagination found my style unconventional to give me the compliment of my unofficial black listing?

At the district high school I encouraged a group of students in my last period of the day to write a brief story, or a cartoon, for forty minutes after which they could do whatever they wanted for ten minutes so long as it did not physically or mentally damage anyone, apart from myself (I should not have said that one). They did so. I was standing on the teacher’s desk, organizing a paper dart battle of the minions when the door behind me opened.

It was the principal. Noise worries most principals, and not just because a revolution of pleasure might be occurring in

a classroom. I threw my paper dart as I swung around on the desk, hitting him on the head to giggles from my fellow darters. 'What's all this?' he asked.

'English,' I replied.

'Look at the mess.' He pointed to all the paper on the floor, in people's hair and still floating down in the air.

'We'll tidy it up,' I told him. 'That was a part of the negotiated deal between teacher and students.'

'Boys and girls,' he announced. 'The bell has gone to end the school day so you may go home. Leave things as they are. The cleaners will tidy the room up.' He nodded. 'Your teacher doesn't know what he is doing.'

'Yes I do,' I told him.

I knew from his body language of bristling like a trapped dog he would ignore the fact I had managed to get every student in the class to write in their empty exercise books, as opposed to their current English teacher whose philosophy was, 'be quiet and you don't have to do anything.'

I was to strike that philosophy of education a few times in my teaching career.

The principal waited for the students to pack their bags and file out before turning towards me. 'You're okay, lad,' he said unexpectedly. 'The kids like you, but your method of teaching is far too drastic in this neck of the woods, so how about we call it a day for any more casual work for the time being.'

'Due to parents not wanting their kids to learn English?'

'I was thinking of your fellow teachers,' he said wryly.

'They'll like me. I'm a nice bloke,' I said, pausing before telling the truth. 'I need the work due to the common clouds of food and rent.'

He ploughed on. 'What you need is a bigger place to teach in.'

‘Like the Gobi desert?’

He grinned at my impressive geographic knowledge, patted me on the arm and walked with me to my Austin A40. He told me he had once been an idealist until ‘reality took over.’

These older teachers sure like confessing to me, I thought, as his story sounded awfully similar to Professor’s Garrett’s. He showed further sympathy for me when he looked at my car, particularly the mobile back seat and manifold colours of flowers of the sixties that looked like weeds, but not enough to invite me back to assist the life of a good but penniless teacher.

I started work on the evening shift in Buntings, a shoe factory near what was then the Christchurch railway station, Moorehouse Ave, for regular money. I needed more than what I was being offered to write for television.

Within a month of employment at the factory I would turn my machine off once I achieved the minimum quota for the evening shift. The quota usually took half of my shift to fulfil. The other half of the shift saw me walk around the factory, reading out poems from my new collection in an exercise book that I had written in time with the machine, about - and for - my fellow workers. The collection of machine poetry was, *The Factory*, which never went outside the factory, especially when it became embedded in a large industrial broom for a black and white effect of disintegration.

This was just before I left the factory.

My fellow workers were unaware they liked poetry. Large women who frowned on expensive deodorants hugged me.

I was asked to speak on their behalf at a meeting with management over their low pay. ‘They’ll listen to you, man. You’re cool with your stuff.’ I did not confuse them by asking what my stuff was. They were not strong on replies in a discussion. I could see from their pay slips the factory was paying them less than the minimum wage for all workers in

New Zealand. The local factory union branch seemed keen about the payment of membership fees, but little else.

The managing director of the factory was unimpressed on being told about the legality of workers remuneration. He looked at me as if to say, 'what are you doing in a factory then?' I could see his point. I told him I had media contacts with another of my scripts on television, along with being a book reviewer at the *Christchurch Press*.

This irritated him further.

He regarded journalists almost as poorly as he did degrees. I was succeeding on both counts. I was further learning there are people it is preferable to be disliked by, notably those of arrogance and little kindness of the human heart.

There are a fair few of those is there not?

I talked to management about the possibility of the economic system of profit sharing to motivate workers to increase the workload and company profits. That was as welcomed by the managing director as my poems were. I was absurdly pleased he loathed me after our meeting, ignoring me when I waved to him as I went by his office to start in the shift, 4 pm. midnight, or a 1 o'clock shift if you were foolish enough to not meet your machine quota, actually having the temerity to want a break for a cuppa, or food, out of time with your machine.

The changes occurred when the company accepted tea breaks and, more importantly, adjusted the pay slips to the minimum rate of factory workers in the following fortnight. The managing director would have liked to sack me, except by then I was the only guaranteed sober worker who could operate the large complicated machine at the centre of the factory floor on my shift.

I sympathized with my working compatriots, partly due to knowing I could get out of the factory sooner or later, and

most of them could not without heading for the dole, or sickness benefits to live off and remain poor. A few people in the evening shift sank further down the slippery slopes of drug addiction, theft (they were not even good at that, given the police arrested two of my fellow workers in front of me) and social impoverishment.

I took the powerful hint of my hometown. The principal of Lincoln HS was right. I probably did need a larger community, particularly one that was unaware of my reputation as a teacher who wanted to change the way English was taught in the education system, abandoning the study of long dead pommie writers to replace them with short dead local ones, as well as the ultra-radical idea of live ones who might come along to schools for a free meal and some fun, oops, contribution to the teaching of English, especially when it was about their work.

The Minister of Education intervened when my case as a teacher writer who was interviewed by Sam Hunt, one of Australasia's best performing poets, in *Affairs* magazine (published by the Department of Education to all high schools in the country) came to light, around the time I wrote another play, *Golden Handshake*, for television. I never saw that one being produced in Auckland due to what was about to happen. Nor would I ever see the play when it appeared on television.

It was these events, more than the possibility I might also be able to teach, being brought to the Minister's attention that caused him to act, along with the fact I mentioned in an interview on the radio that Riccarton HS had refused to employ me, giving a vacant English teaching job to a person who was yet to complete her BA.

I was finally offered teaching jobs where problems were larger than achievements in high schools, such as teaching at Aranui HS, not far from the sewage ponds near the estuary of the Avon and Heathcote rivers. I would often pass the sewage

ponds and think of teaching close by as the years went along. I turned the offers down. I had my plane ticket to take off into the sky on my way to other places where the poor and dysfunctional would welcome me with open arms, as opposed to having their arms squeezed behind their backs by a politician.

I was back to my realization that being forced to put up with me would nettle a few English teachers in my hometown. They were terrified of change and I was riding its surfboard, even if my single attempt at 'real' surfing had seen me come off my brother-in-law's board where I took an hour to reach the shore in a strong rip. I had stopped waving and yelling to people how I might drown if I was not rescued. They were either deaf or waved back in agreement with my drowning.

Consequently, I had floated on my back, contemplating the sky to avoid thinking of sharks that might discuss eating me, eventually drifting into the shore two beaches down from North Beach where I started.

I needed a different rip on a different board.

I was twenty-seven years old when I selected Sydney to go to as part of what I called my three years plan, the idea I got from the Josef Stalin era in Russia. I knew he was one of the worst tyrants of the twentieth century, responsible for more deaths than Adolf Hitler was. Both were short men, building their ego up by leading dictatorial regimes that knocked other people off in the millions on the grounds they had the effrontery to be human.

Also, Sydney did not require a small fortune in the process of moving your household from one country to another.

I was going to complete my three years plan of 'how to earn a living' in Sydney and then select somewhere else in the world for my following three years plan if I needed to. I would not. My three years plan of the mid-seventies would become my thirty years plan in teaching on the theatre front of Sydney

education. The major reason for this consistency saw me regularly putting up with things I did not always agree with, as we often do in life's journey. It is one that saw me selling/telling copious stories with a smile on my face.

INTERVIEWS

**Poetry can Touch and Extrude a Sort
of Revelation: Dr. Santosh Alex in
Conversation with Jayanta
Mahapatra**

Santosh Alex: Congratulations for the translation of your poems into Hindi. How do you feel at this point of time? Do you think it should have been rendered into Hindi much before?

Jayanta Mahapatra: Thank you. I should like to focus my thoughts on the next poem I want to write. Nothing else. My hurts have always been my own, since I was a child, buried inside me. And these hurts are mine, nobody else's.

SA: Which was your first published poem and in which journal it was published ?

JM: "Loneliness" perhaps. In a literary journal called *SOUTH AND WEST* in USA and simultaneously in a Calcutta journal, *LEVANT*, in 1968 another group of three poems.

SA: Jayanta Mahapatra is a poet from a generation which preceded *Midnight's Children*.

When you came up with your first book of poems *Close the sky, Ten by Ten* in 1971, your contemporaries like Kamala Das and Keki N Daruwalla younger to you had already published

their first poetry collection. Were your fingers crossed of getting accepted and talked about? If yes why, if no why?

JM: Yes, When I started writing poetry, these poets were already established ones. Most poets would have done their best work, I guess. Look, I was a student of science, but I loved literature. I have never imagined I would write poetry one day. It was like facing a wall at that time. The reviews I got were discouraging, and I had to get a hold on myself to continue writing poetry. The good part was that the new poems I wrote and sent out to significant journals like Critical Quarterly in England, were accepted – and that too by editors no less than Prof. C.B Cox and Prof. Anthony Dyson. It was truly exciting to be published there.

SA: From your first poetry collection to the recent one titled Random Descent, how do you evaluate your journey as a poet in terms of subject, style and language ?

JM: It is difficult for me to evaluate my work. Let me be clear on this: I never intended to be a “poet” in the first place. I was a student of physics, and quite a bit of time when I was teaching physics went into research work.. However, I did not complete it. May be I realised the futility of working on a topic which did not relate to the development and betterment of society. Well, now I somehow feel that poetry more or less does the same thing. But poetry can reach out to others and extrude a sort of revelation sometimes. This is what poetry is able to do., touch another and that’s what matters. My earliest poems were exercises perhaps, written mainly to please my own self. I can’t say. These poems were more fused in themselves, and tended to be abstract. Critics were disappointed when my first two books appeared. And I was hurt. But I wanted to go on writing, so I began to read contemporary

poetry, and thought I should write simpler, understandable poems. It is difficult to write a good poem, even today, I am speaking of myself.

SA: Your early poems were born of love, of love's selfishness. They celebrate not only passion, the body's spacious business, but consistently evoke a melancholic atmosphere rent with absences, fears, foreboding and sufferings. Do you think the word "love" has lost its meaning in today's context, your opinion?

JM: Any beginning poet writes about love, because that is the first subject that comes to him. However it is not easy to write about love. I must have been a very foolish person to have written about love. I had not read the love poems of Pablo Neruda, it was perhaps the limit of my stupidity. You ask about love, I don't have any answers. A hundred year back in my life it could have been a kind of infatuation, today, I can't say what love is. That moment when you don't need anyone else changes in one's life. May be love is never real, in a real world.

SA: It is seen that slowly and steadily you have released yourself from the lonesome citadel of love, and learnt to involve with other men, living or dead with many other succulent chambers of living. Fear of ageing, fear of death, and love for life and memory, love for the golden past an inquisitiveness to live amid contraries of life were the themes in your later poetry. How difficult was this transition ?

JM: I don't know, but you can't write about the same things all your life. You learn to look at the world around you, and you realize painfully that you are not the person who runs the world. You learn to open your eyes and ears, and as you lie along, listening, you discover the knowledge of death you carry within yourself is shared with all living

creatures, human beings and animals. And so you will write about these things. Perhaps the subjects of poems change instinctively.

SA: Landscape and Nature form a part of your poetry- Shrines, temple, rickshaw pullers, deodar trees, small fragments of light and shadow, the cows chewing on so forth are depicted with ease. How difficult was to bring Indian ethos and feelings to English, your thoughts on “Indianness” and English?

JM: It wasn't difficult for me to express my native culture in English. May be a good reason would be that I began writing poetry late in my life, when I had mastered my knowledge of the English language. I had a missionary school education with a British headmaster who liked me a lot and encouraged me in the ways of English. Books were a great help, I learnt a lot from them, picking up novels and story books from libraries wherever my father travelled. And later, I used to save up the little money I got, to buy books from the railway book stall.

And “Indianness ?” I don't know. I am an Indian and I write about the way I live, my people live, Is that Indianness?

SA: The woman is yet another image in Mahapatra's poetry. As a symbol, she is usually identified with the 'discarded things'. She is often portrayed as a sexually oppressed by the so called patriarchal system and poverty. The image of the woman has been vividly presented in the poem, “The whorehouse in a Calcutta Street.” Your thoughts on women and their freedom in total and especially in Orissa.

JM: Well, the Indian woman, for all her depiction in our old, sacred texts as a supreme being, has been the victim of

lust, cruelty and violence. And we haven't been able to do anything about this. Perhaps things are changing today, with the new generation of girls asserting their rights. I don't know, but in my childhood I saw my cousin being beaten up by her drunk husband, I watched helplessly my grandmother being mistreated – and today, in a slum about fifty yards from my house, young women are being doused with kerosene and burned to death for paltry, trivial reasons. And I suppose Orissa and Andhra have most of these victims of oppression.

SA: In one of your poems titled “Night” you opine nobody know who eats up whom on the other side of the window ? Towards the conclusion of the poem you say “All I have left is this moment “. Do you think in our country (especially in Orissa) the poor people are still in bondage and they don't have the freedom to enjoy the present moment of life? Will the sympathy of a poet alone give them some hope ?

JM:Certainly, more than sixty years after independence, our poor are still poor, and don't even have a shelter over their heads. It's the moment that matters, the homeless still throng religious shrines for food, still beg for food at railway stations, eating leftovers from the trains that serve food for passengers. Many fulfil their appetite with cheap drinks, tea or water. No, I 'am not making this up. You have to walk a little way down the coast to see how our people live.

And then, a poem is not a question of sympathy. It is just what one sees and feels that a poet writes about and a poet knows well that no one is listening to him. And our “right” is not merely about hunger, but about inequality and injustice and a total indifference to our people's needs.

SA: Your poetry is difficult to comprehend by the ordinary reader at the very first attempt because

of obscurity, complexity and allusiveness in your poems. Have you ever thought your poems should have been little simpler in terms of expression. ?

JM: I believe you are right when you speak of the obscurity in my poems, But that's how I write them, those especially when I began writing. But then, I feel poetry should leave the reader with something to ponder, to think about. Even if the reader doesn't understand the whole poem, perhaps parts of it would leave the reader with a mood, exuberance or despair, and this much would be enough for the poem's goal. At least that's how I would like to look at poetry. And to remove the mystery out of a poem doesn't seem quite right to me..... But perhaps, my poems are simpler now than what they were, four decades ago. Readers should vouch for that.

SA: Aiyappa Panicker opined "The tragic consciousness doesnot seem to operate in the work of any Indian poet in English as disturbingly as in that of Jayanta Mahapatra." How do you bring about pain & agony in your poetry? Reasons.

JM: It's not about the question of writing effectively about pain in my poems. As I was saying, nothing much has changed in these years after we achieved independence, the poverty, the illiteracy (especially in the remote tribal communities here) and a hard casteism- all these make our people struggle with their lives. If I don't write about them, who will? I can't say why, But in a sense I feel that my life is bound to those about whom I write. And I don't wish to trivialize. I have often been to the remote hinterland to see for myself how a part of me lives, and that's important for me, it cripples my heart.

SA: Many of your poems deal with the atrocities in state of Orissa. Being in the state for the past four decades, do you think writers from Orissa had

really voiced the atrocities of the people and the system. Your thoughts.

JM: No, not many have written about the recent atrocities in their poems. I feel established poets have steered clear of the issue, preferring to write about safe subjects like love and myths. I don't wish to comment on this. Orissa's tribal Christians are still living in camps. As a poet, I can write in the only way I can. I cannot comprehend this divisiveness in the name of religion. It hurts. The victims of the terrible violence in Kandhamal just six months back, are very real. This experience of violence is new to me, I had never felt how I feel today, when I was a boy. And this is a country which professes peaceful ideals. I ask myself, is it the same country in which I was born?

SA: You have been largely influenced by the father of our nation. The poem "Requiem" is an example for this. Do you think Gandhism is still relevant? If yes, why ?

JM: I should like to believe that we lost our country when Gandhi was shot dead on 30th January 1948. Or it was the beginning of the end of what our leaders had fought for. I don't know anything about politics. I don't know anything about Gandhism. So I can't speak of its "relevance" today. Gandhi's courage was exemplary. As a student at Patna University in Bihar during the years 1946 – 49, I had the opportunity to attend his prayer meeting in the Bankipur Maidan when the country was ripped by Hindu – Muslim riots. It is but natural that I pay homage to men like Gandhi, that's all I can truthfully say.

SA: In the internet age do you think the readers of poetry are dwindling in number. Your take on this.

JM: Although I am a man of science, I don't use a computer. I am sorry I lag behind in the internet age. So I can't talk

about the readers of poetry. Poetry has always attracted very few readers. But then there will always be some who will ready and enjoy poetry. Here, in my hometown of Cuttack, there were probably ten readers of mine thirty years back. And today there are probably thirty readers of mine. So, generally speaking, the readership is almost constant.

SA: History proves that across the globe poets were jailed and tortured as there is explosion in poetry. Yet fiction writers are more talked about and discussed. Do you think in our country poetry still has a long way to go. Especially English poetry.

JM: As I said, poetry has a limited readership. It's not easy to get into a poem in one cursory reading. But fiction is different. Look at the sales of Mills & Boon books, for example. You pick up a novel at a railway station or bus stand and realize you can pass the time when you travel. But you can't do that for a poetry book. No, whether a regional language or English, poetry will have limited sales. Time won't change this.

SA: Your poems have been translated into many regional and foreign languages. You have Successfully translated Sakti Chattopadhyay's poems in English. Your opinion on translation. Do you think translators have been given their due in our country? Reasons.

JM: To speak the truth, I like doing translations. And I began my writing "career" doing translations from the Oriya to English. I am still working on translations; it offers me a sort of challenge, to produce an English poem from an Oriya poem or Vice Versa.

About the "due" you mention, I am not keen on getting any such, if dues are a sort of awards. I have translated seven books of Oriya poetry into English, a book of Bangla

poetry, besides a number of stories and essays. I think we should better not go into his question of awards or “dues” ; there is so much of politics in all this too. I am lucky I am able to work in the field of translation as well, and that should be enough.

SA: The new poetic forms such as Haiku, SMS poems etc are gaining popularity. Do you think this will long last? Your opinion.

JM: The haiku is an old form, and some of the haikus penned by Basko still are read. They give unlimited pleasure. The haiku will go on. But I can't speak of sms poems, I am ignorant of this. However, concrete poetry is still being written in many places in the West. May be I am old fashioned, I still write the so – called conservative poem when I can.

SA: Do you think the media can play an important part in popularizing poetry or for that matter any form of literature. Or does it merely fulfil its duties.

JM: Sorry, I can't say. I would like to write my poem in peace or whatever, and not think of the media.

SA: There are many young poets like Usha Akella, Tabish Khair, Gorima Basu, Bijoy Mishra etc who are talented. Do you think they can take forward the legacy of senior poets like yourself, Kamala Das, Keki, Meana Alexander etc? Your thoughts.

JM: Sorry I haven't read three of the poets you mentioned. But there are a number of poets who are writing superbly. Their collections have been published by the Sahitya Academi, and their poetry is relevant to the times in which we live.

I suppose one has to go on writing without thinking of what your labours would bring- is what's crucial. And that one should have faith in what one writes.

SA: Chandrabhaga is a reputed journal. You have introduced many writers and translators through this journal. I was fortunate enough to have my translations published in Chandrabhaga. Any plan for its revival?

JM: No, not right now. The support I had earlier is not there anymore.

SA : Let the coolness of the first June rain give us relief, let Orissa break free from the captivity of hazards, let us talk about a little change in our lives, let the pink buds of the tall cotton tree burst, let the nets being dragged in the river mouth be full of hilsa. Let us hope God has a better plan for our country. Sir, I am grateful to you for the opportunity given. May God give you good health and happiness throughout your life.

JM: Thank you. Yes, let's have a country we can be proud of. And let me think of this day as a gift I can fruitfully use.

Nalini Priyadarshni
Interviews
D. Russel Michhimer

Q. How does a poem begin for you- with an idea, an image or a form?

A. What inspires me to write a poem varies considerably. Often times it is a person, usually a female whose attention I want to attract. It's a good way to get a second date! Some times it is an occasion or a place. Such things as weddings, graduations and birthdays frequently prompt a poem. I frequently incorporate acrostics into such poems—a name or a phrase spelled out in the first letters of each line.

Nature is a great inspiration for poems. There are so many fantastic views everywhere we look and processes both dynamic and subtle that when noted evoke appreciation or awe and trying to capture them and their nature with words and verse is a constant invitation.

Sometimes an idea or an opinion about something can get a poem underway. I tend to like ideas that kind of comprehensively organize a subject or process because they give one a ready structure to base a poem on. Something like the twelve months of the year can be a chance to express one's own unique perspective on a reality we all have in common.

There are at least hundreds, if not thousands of different forms that have been used over time in different societies around the world to write poetry. Discovering new ones is a constant wonder and of course most of the time I try my hand at trying to execute at least one using the

parameters of the form. Frequently there are forms that are fun to write in and many poems, not necessary one after another, ensue. Some are deceptively simple looking, once they are finished but demand some very crafty manipulation of words and ideas. Others look quite complicated when finished but are surprisingly easy to write.

Many of my poems come from a single word or short phrase that occurs to me, sometimes out of the blue. I just write it down and then something else occurs to me that goes with that and I keep on going and before I know it, there is a new poem. Those are particularly fun because I rarely know where the poem is headed in the beginning so it just kind of gets discovered as it is being written and can have surprise twists anywhere along the way. I guess writing those is like a journey where when you are finished you end up with a map of the path you took.

Q. A lot of your work is in strict form- from Sestina to ghazals to sedoka. How do you choose the form of your poem?

A. Sometimes I am simply trying out a new form. Other times the subject matter is closely fitted to, or even dictated by the form. For example, let's say I want to write a poem for someone, maybe it's their birthday. Acrostics are always fun for that, so the first thing I do is see how many letters are in their name. I delight if it turns out to be, say, fourteen. That is the number of lines in a sonnet. And there are several kinds of sonnets, I choose a type that seems appropriate, write the name down the left margin and start writing. So I end up with a sonnet that is also an acrostic.

Now of course the more forms one is familiar with, the more likely it is there may be a form that will work. Many forms involve rhyme patterns. I am not the best rhymer

in the world but with practice one improves. The trick is to not let such things about a form deter you from trying them, but rather look at them as an adventure. Some adventures turn out better than others. Every poem can't be a masterpiece, though it helps as you write to think it might be. I just try to get it all down first, not that I don't agonize over some words as I write, but it is during the revision that one polishes and hones the words and form. I prefer to do the entire process in a single sitting. Others prefer a resting period between drafts.

I might also mention that if one is using a form effectively, it does not call attention to itself but is like a nearly invisible support structure.

Q. How important is the accessibility of meaning in a poem? Should readers work hard to 'solve' the poem?

A. The answer to that question is multifaceted. It is a delicate balance between being blatant, being obvious, being esoteric and being cryptic. If a poem is written in a vocabulary with which I am not familiar it would need to be very intriguing in some other way to prompt me to run for a dictionary to educate myself. On the other hand we all have different vocabularies and I have no trouble using a dictionary to learn the meaning of words I don't recognize. If a poem is full of allusions to ancient poems and writers in Greece or elsewhere, that my non classical education makes me unfamiliar with, again I am not likely to pursue it for long. If poets care about reaching an audience I appreciate it most when, if such obscure references are present, I am lead to understand by the poem itself, a preliminary short introduction to the ideas or (horrors) footnotes. Poets who do not show their readers or listeners some courtesy in helping them understand what they are trying to communicate are not my favorites and I don't think very highly of them. That is not to say

that I need everything absolutely spelled out for me though, after all it is analogy that forms much of the skeleton of most good poetry and if the poet is successful it is because their use of that tool is appropriately applied.

If it is the intent of the poet to impart meaning with the poem then it is their and not the reader's, responsibility to show enough of that meaning that it can be grasped by careful listeners. Of course, good poetry has many layers of meaning and if it takes more than a single exposure to the poem to ascertain those layers all the better.

Q. Do you maintain a daily writing schedule?

A. My lifestyle is so different most of the time from day to day that I really don't. I do it when I have taken care of what needs to be taken care of at any given time. I do tend to favor the late hours of the evening and early hours that follow directly of the morning for writing.

Q. How long does it take you to write a poem?

A. That entirely depends on the poem and frequently on the form. Sometimes I can write a haiku in the time it takes to write the words down; at others I may wrestle with the syllables for fifteen minutes. Many times free verse comes just as fast as I can write it down and stops when the poem finds its organic ending. If I am writing using a form, it again depends on the form. I tend to try to write it down the way I want it the first time through, I don't do much revising; but that might mean I spend ten minutes laboring over an eight word line sometimes. I tend to like long forms, such as double sestinas, or Crowns of Sonnets and of course those necessitate spending a lot more time; several days on occasion to finish them (not working 24 hours a day of course.) Some foreign forms that I love to try, take a long time; it is not unusual for me to spend two hours writing a ten line ghazal for instance.

Q. Do you spend a long time revising?

A. I revise as I write so it is hard to say. Except for perhaps a word or two I rarely revise poems once I consider them finished. I am a horrible speller so revisions often consist of just getting the spelling correct.

Q. Did you believe in your work, even at an early stage?

A. Most of my early poems were written for various classes in community college and aside from some good letter grades from teachers didn't get much exposure. But I was living in Portland then, Oregon's largest city, and there was quite an active poetry scene of readings, open mikes in taverns and the like going on in the early seventies. I started going to some of those venues trying to figure out how to become a poet.. Through some venue, I have forgotten which, I became acquainted with Stuart "Sid" Lyman. Sid was a retired teacher who organized what he called the Portland Poetry Center and he put out a newsletter monthly with a calendar of all the poetry happenings he could gather. He asked for volunteers to help fold and address the newsletter and I volunteered and we soon had a friendship going. Sid had more friends than any one I had ever met, most of them poets. He was an extremely well educated fellow, having studied at the Sorbonne in Paris after serving under McArthur and being instrumental in reorganizing the education system of Japan. Helping him with the newsletter became a pretty regular thing and it wasn't long before he had arranged for me to give a reading. It was in Powell's Bookstore which at the time was a narrow old store crammed with wall to wall books; it would go on to become the largest used bookstore west of the Mississippi. I had an audience of about half a dozen people and I knew four of them and I was still terrified—but I did it! I was a poet. Sid had infinite patience and was the master of constructive

criticism. Over the course of a couple of years we enjoyed many a gallon of cheap wine and all night discussions about life and poetry. And he had a huge cabinet full of his poems that he would share and I would share my latest efforts. In short, he was my mentor. If it hadn't been for his guidance I would probably never come to consider myself a poet. He died all too soon but sometimes I still hear his laughter echoing through my poetry. Not to belittle the influence of all the literature I studied in the course of getting my Bachelors Degree, but I can honestly say I learned more about language and poetry from him than from all the rest collectively in my education process.

Q. What role does a mentor plays in the career of a writer/poet?

A. I mentioned above the role that my mentor Sid played in my development as a poet. I was incredibly lucky to have found him. So a good mentor can inspire one to write more, help you learn from your mistakes and introduce you to the depths of many facets of poetry that are difficult to learn any other way. One of the keys though that makes a mentor relationship be productive is the poet who is being mentored's relentless picking of the mentor's mind. That and a well developed ability to be able to listen.

Q. As someone who has travelled to East including India, Nepal, Thailand Indonesia etc. and your present close ties with India, what do you have to say about mysticism of east v/s Intellectualism of west?

A. Well I'm not so sure that one can make that kind of distinction between the two. I have studied as many wisdom systems as I could find from cultures around the world. Not only as they exist now but how they have developed and changed over many centuries. In general, most belief systems have teachings that help with understanding of the world in which we live. Western

thought has developed more along understanding the psyche via psychology rather than mysticism although alchemy for instance is closer to mysticism than it is to psychology. That is a very complex question and I find it best to not see the two as opposing forces but ones that complement each other.

Q. How do you think internet and social media contribute towards well-being of the poetry?

A. I think they have made poetry and learning about poetry much more accessible. You can find most classic poets' works on line and many obscure ones as well. Forms or mechanics of poetry are easy to research with a couple of clicks.

It has given opportunity for many poets to share their work and get feedback on it. Of course the quality of the poetry as well as the quality of critique runs a full gamut of quality. I see that as a good thing in the long run, in that it makes poetry much more available to the world in general. I would hope that more opportunity allows more good poetry and poets to surface and have their work recognized. Of course, along with the increased amount of wheat comes a commensurate amount of chaff.

I think it will allow the rise of more poetry that takes place outside the narrow halls of academia to be aired and appreciated. As a poet I value what I learn from other poets as well as teachers and the masters. I would hope many share that outlook and experience.

Q. What is your opinion on self-publishing as opposed to traditional publishing?

A. I feel it certainly has its place, particularly as easy as it is now a days. I think it used to have a kind of stigma about it, but it seems quite acceptable today. It is probably true that the over all quality suffers from the glut of self

published material. But I think that it also increases the poet's ability to reach an audience and increases their chance of being "discovered." This is a subject both sides of which may be argued quiet successfully. Both have their pros and cons. To me, feedback on what I write is important after the fact and precious little of it seems to exist no matter what the publishing method. It should probably be noted too that few poets make much money on published works, no matter the method.

Q. Do you think it's possible to contain the spiritual world and also be of the "real world" in 2014?

A. This is a single world in my perception and we have nowhere else to go. Whatever I have in the "spiritual" world I also have in the "mundane" world. Again, a complex question but I no longer make those kind of distinctions for myself. It is all one. As above, so below; as below, so above as Hermes would have it. And as folks who practice Zen might note, "Before enlightenment, chopping wood and carrying water; after enlightenment, chopping wood and carrying water."

Q. What is your advice to budding writers?

A. Anyone can profess to be a poet or a writer. The thing that separates the real ones from the rest is that they write. Write, write, write and then write some more. That and study the craft. It is a craft and many have practiced it before, seek to learn from them. To not do so deprives the poet of a huge arsenal of useful tools that may be employed. Sure, there may be a select few who really do not need education in order to write decent poetry, but they are few and far between. At least that has been my experience. Reading and listening to other poets is something I include in that process of learning. Take note of what you like. Few find their own voice over night; some

never do but if you don't keep writing it is guaranteed you never will. Remember too that there is not an editor who is going to come around and ask if you have a box of poetry under the bed that you would like to share. So share it every chance you get.

Jaydeep Sarangi in Conversation with Vihang Naik

This interview will have a global audience not just your Indian colleagues so could we start by you telling us a little about your childhood, schooling and tertiary education?

Jaydeep Sarangi: Tell us something about your birth and parentage.

Vihang A. Naik: I was born to Gujarati Parents in Surat, Gujarat. After my birth my parents left the city, where I was born, Surat. They soon left the city to arrive at Baroda. My primary schooling was at Navrachana School, Baroda. I shifted often from Baroda to Ahmedabad. Changed cities and schools. Now it is the journey that remains with me, my memory. I used to scribble verses during later part of my schooling. Of course, after school I then entered the portals of The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. By this time I burnt one collection of poetry written in English by me during my early period of writing. I don't know, but this personal event of my burning my collection was published in local newspaper when at twenty four my published book of poetry was on stand in 1993. Here I was introduced to Philosophy and Dr. G. N. Devy at MSU who encouraged me to read out from my published first collection at Commonwealth Meet Up organized by him where he released *my City Times & Other Poems*. I had just completed my Undergraduate Programme in Philosophy and English Literature then. It was just then after participating in National Seminar on Teaching Creative Writing: A Creative Approach

conducted by Clark Blaise from Iowa at M. S. University of Baroda my ideas on poetry were formulated and later Prof. P. C. Kar who was there for my Post Graduate Programme called me to present my views on poetry at his recently founded Forum On Contemporary Theory. As participant I presented my Poetry Manifesto (an essay) propounding views on poetry and arts. Along with my post graduate programme I tried to establish poetry circle at MSU where practicing poets would come and read out from any languages including English. It did survive as long as I was there. From South Gujarat via Ahmedabad and Prantij (the place I used to commute for teaching assignment while staying in Ahmedabad during 1996 – 97) Now I am at Ambaji in North Gujarat teaching at Shree Ambaji Arts College since last fifteen years or so.

JS: When did you start writing poems?

VAN: I remember, I wrote my first poetic lines in my morning walk at Maharishi Arvind Garden in Fategeunj, Baroda. Though I did not actually write it down but you see, it will not leave you until you put it down on paper. There is some kind of psychological process involved. I did not maintain a diary. It was a wonderful moment.

JS: How do you visualize life?

VAN: Life is beautiful.

JS: Which British writer did cast on everlasting impression in your mind?

VAN: Since we use English language and our education system was constructed by British agents along with our education syllabus British writers will remain ever present though at writer's later conscious life one may not like it or may resist consciously out of anxiety of influence. There are some strong English writers' such as Charles Dickens who depicted the scenes of London with his world view we have now come out with similar view and made a Bollywood movie titled *Slum Dog Millionaire*.

JS: When did you plan to publish your works?

VAN: Initially I used to read out my poems to my friends and I am fortunate to have many friends. Then as I shifted from schools to University, things changed. I had burnt one collected poems by this time. I then started to write in a new mode focusing more on internal structure. Previous, I thought, was heavily influenced by English writing poets, perhaps. Some new friends suggested to it would be better to get the works published from then onwards there was no turning back.

JS: When did you come to Lucknow University to recite your poems and how many poems did you recite here?

VAN: It was, I believe, January of 2006, 13th to 16th to be precise that I read out my poems at University of Lucknow. The event was organized by 50th All India English Teachers Conference with local secretary as Prof. Nishi Pandey (Director, UGC – Academic Staff College and Dept. of English & Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow). I read out from my collection *Making A Poem* then. “Are you looking for that poet?” edited by Nissim Ezekiel.

JS: Which Indian English writer do you like most and why?

VAN: India has many good writers and most of them are good which is the reason of my liking them.

JS: What is the theme of ‘Summer Hill Devdars’?

VAN: It was my spell of June, 2001 as Associateship of Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Rashtrapati Nivas in Shimla. The poem was written during that time. I stayed for about a month at Rashtrapati Nivas and it was from here that British ruled India. The poem has some connotation with the history of India. Of course, I was spell bond at the first sight of Devdars at Summer Hill where I stayed. The

poetic process is most complex form of communication. And the result is Summer Hill Devadars.

JS : In a particular poem, ‘The End of An Affair’, you have mentioned, ‘...life is a tale of prose’. It appears as if you were highly influenced by Macbeth’s dialogue - ‘Life is a tale told by an idiot’, well written by the great English dramatist William Shakespeare. Did it happen by chance or you wrote it deliberately?

VAN: In life, as in Literature, there are some accidents. The End of An Affair is an example. In fact, I never had the slightest of thought of Macbeth’s dialogue. It is after putting it down on paper I was astonished. Shakespeare is Shakespeare. But if you did not miss the following line which states “I felt love as short as haiku”. The protagonist here does not resemble Macbeth. Often you may find voices and tones.

JS : Please elaborate your line, ‘The roots won’t die. You witness rebirth in the mould of stone’ (The Banyan City). What does this symbolize? What idea do you want to establish through these lines?

VAN: I believe a poet says only through poetry. If a poet had to elaborate one would write prose instead. Once you paraphrase a poem the poem or the poetical part is lost. A poem communicates to the poet in every person. What you derive through a poem is yours. It is a reader who makes a poem. And a poet would be the last person who would establish anything through his ideas. Establishing ideas would be left for philosophers. A poet would only communicate through poetry.

JS : How did the Gujarat earthquake affect you? What is the theme of ‘Jeevangeet’ as you, perhaps, wrote it after hazardous earthquakes created massive havoc in Gujarat?

VAN: Gujarat has been close to my heart since I have been born and brought up in Gujarat. It was my first experience of life. We never did talk of earthquake in a serious way as people do live by it in Japan or other earthquake prone parts of the world. The disaster it created within seconds was immense and horrific. It moved me to first to put down in my mother tongue, Gujarati. The title of the poem is Gujarat with sub title as 26th January, 2001. The national Republic Day turned out to be for us Earthquake day with death toll which, at first, could not be counted. I remember, I was on a journey on the same day from my headquarters, Ambaji to Ahmedabad to my mother's place. And I saw deaths on the same night I was called to read out my poetry at Poetry Circle, Mumbai on 27th January, 2001. Jeevabgeet is a multi them at ccollection, of course, experimentation is what binds the collection.

JS: How did you come upon the idea of 'Making a Poem'?

VAN: I was discussing the theory of making a poem in an informal way at The M. S. University of Baroda during 1993 – 1995 where I had started the Poetry Reading Circle at Dept. of English, MSU Baroda. I received informal permission from Dr. G. N. Devy and Prof. P. C. Kar at Dept. of English to hold poetry readings at now V. Y. Katak Seminar Room. Many students from different faculties and at times people who had interest in poetry from outside the Campus used to attend readings. Over informal discussions over cups of tea I used to think about Making A Poem then. Discussed Theories of Literature and poetry. On act of writing. Creative Writing. Nothing helped. But If you are still planning to construct a theory for making a poem and which would be accountable to answer the mysterious process involved, you can come close to an extent but never precisely where you wish to be. For instance, if you analyse any poem ruthlessly just to study that creative process that goes with it, what you

get is ninety percent of the truth. The tenth part, vital in making your oeuvre; will be left unanalysed like an unknown element in your creative work.

Once I made up my mind to face this challenge and provide the methodology of making a poem. I found it beyond my competence. I finally decided to express my response through poetry. Making a poem became a bug with me until I could not keep it with myself. I then took the pen and started Making A Poem on the art of making a poem. My personal poetic response to the act of making a poem.

Making a Poem

To write a poem the pen
has to slide making a line

over a sheet. You see a
snake uncoil. Words bare

themselves. You come to know
what nakedness is or does.

Manaka's charm works as a
rule. A Sage needs senses.

In this episode the pen runs
out of ink, Refill. The sound

of music resonates. Sheets flap.
The dance of the black ink and

A little light. A poem is made.

JS: What typographical experimentation did you do while composing 'City Times and other poems'? What about its versification?

VAN: You caught a right word. "Typographical Experimentation" and the other term "Versification". A poem to express its content needs experimentation and

innovation without which there would never be newness and addition to culture and tradition. Versification that is meter or the rhythmic structure may not be apparently present or visible but it has internal structure. Versification often is artificial or ornamental with forced rhyming which a free verse shuns. And experimental poetry avoids.

JS : What 'Poetry Manifesto', is about, the book that you published in 2010?

VAN: Poetry Manifesto is my collection of poems written in English. It is from *City Times & Other Poems, Making A Poem* and has some space for my Poems which were not included in previous collections. It carries a poem titled Poetry Manifesto which happens to be the title of my new and selected poems as well. I believed one should write poems without bothering about the why, the how and the what of poetry. It carries a simple thought of putting your thought and feelings fused in poetic form without bothering about craft of poetry. Once you read the poem Poetry Manifesto you will get the hang of whole Poetry Manifesto, of course, personal. It is not intended to be my political agenda.

JS: You see that people in India, who are fond of English writing, appear to be interested more in fiction or short stories than English poetry. What reasons do you find about this?

VAN: You are right to some extent but you see, it is difficult to generalize. Poetry is way of life for India. We have not compartmentalized literature. What we wrote or was written in India was always poetry. The recent divide comes from British system of education if one extends the thought. Of course, the post – Independence generation and the succeeding generations have been influenced by English system of thought. I heard the other day that

mass media has created a generation who does not like to read and write literature. I wouldn't blame mass media. What we can do is with the support take poetry through mass media to people.

JS: Would you like to say anything about current Indian English writing? Do the new Indian English writers follow the British parameters of writing or they well in their own ways?

VAN: Indian English writing and particularly, poetry is sufficiently mature. You can always find good poetry and there are number of good anthologies besides the controversial *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets* chosen and edited by Shri R. Parthasarathy. One good thing it did that it defined Indian English poetry writing style, diction and tone besides influencing young generation of poets. Some New Indian English writers, one can say, are well in their own ways to put it in your words.

JS: What is the future of English poetry in India?

VAN: Indian English poetry has greater and spiritual future as future of poetry in general. As we have seen of past history of Indian English poetry and poetry in general we see the number of readers has increased. It will act as an intuitive and spiritual force for future and next generations. Ultimately it is the readers who breathe life into the poems. With the advancement of internet and communication technology, future generations will have greater access to reading and poetry.

JS: What is the importance of literature in the time of rapid flux of growing economy?

VAN: Literature will always be important no matter whatever economic growth you have. In fact, the more with growing economy you need more of Literature because it is poetry or Literature which creates man a human. Only poetry will make your heart throb. It is say that there is little

poetry for our bureaucrats and IAS exams. One can design papers putting poetry for every higher or decision making entrance exams.

JS What message would you like to communicate to your readers and this generation, in particular?

VAN : Develop a habit of reading good poetry or eating ice cream. Either side of same coin.

JS : Will Indian English poetry travel?

VAN: Yes ! It'll still cross miles and miles. May be, one day you may get theory as well while on the path. It happened with Sri Aurobindoit may happen in future as well...I remain optimistic ...with poetry and theory

Thank you, Vihang for talking to us! Wishes for all your creative power in you!

Coffee with the Poet, Mohineet Kaur Boparai Conducted by Chistina Finlayson Taylor

Hi, Mohineet! I have been intrigued by India for a few decades now as it seems like a place of such creativity, color, beauty, vitality... What is it about your culture that sparks such fine creative expression?

Mohineet Kaur Boparai: I believe that living in India has given me an experience of living in diversity. The number of languages spoken in India are 438; there are several religious beliefs, and cultures living under a homogeneous governing system. There is so much to learn and observe, not only in people but also in the geography. There are the Himalayas, Ganga-Brahmaputra plains, the vast Deccan plateau that covers most of southern India; and the Thar desert; Tropical, alpine vegetation and xerophytes; maritime climate as well as the severe seasons of north India; metropolitan malls and slums; local artisans and foreign brands. Living in such a space, there are so many different things to experience. I am particularly drawn to the landscapes and the colorful tribal people. The diverse cultural intermingling motivates creative expression because there are so many different cues to catch when one goes about perceiving the land.

Q. You are India's gazing bright star. How do you define poetry, and who or what inspired you to understand what poetry is, what makes it poetry?

A. MKB: Poetry is an overflow, and hence it begins from some kind of containment of what is within. And because

it is within and accumulating, it has a certain impetus to come out. At the same time it is fluid, liquefied and must be solidified. I believe, in this process something is always lost, something is gained and something is revealed. So poetry is in many ways a discovery of the self, society and the universe. A discovery also of a certain type of emotion that I think poets only experience when they are writing. I believe that it is an emotion that feels like some form of saturation and then slowly it begins to disappear and when it is finally lost, there is nothing more to write. It is like playing hide-and-seek. First you face the wall and count (one faces the commonplace); then you begin your search (which is the challenge, the looking about and looking for) and the search involves some chemical secretions in the body, maybe a little bit of adrenaline too (and you are enjoying the whole process). It is a process that involves the head and the heart that ultimately lead to some hidden acumen and acuteness. And the whole time that you are writing, you are also being insightful and imaginative, and the hidden is being revealed one by one, coming out of the hiding place it inhabits, into the scorching heat of the summer holidays that are past with childhood.

To the second part of the question, I think I've been writing poetry since a very long time, since I was a teenager, but in the beginning it was not even perception, it was merely a rhyming of lines and a collection of images. But I store my poetry in diaries and on the computer and therefore I remember the poems I wrote as a twelve year old. One was about birds, another one was written after I saw the movie Titanic, and another one was about a scary night in a palace. So as a child, what inspired me to write poetry were my childhood whims, all the things that somehow caught my imagination and loaded me with their immensity. The inspirations have

been the same ever since- things that are massive and mysterious, things that I must understand. The inner inspirations, however are never all intrinsic, there is always another side to them- the overt, the things we catch from the outside like birds who later want to break open their cages. The external inspirations are events and people. There must be a long list of people who inspired me. My parents firstly, because they were always the first ones I took my poems to and the fact that they were excited and overwhelmed by my obscure, childish attempts at poetry, they encouraged me to write on. Then, when I met my husband and he and our family became the driving force. His patience motivates my pen and my second collection is about what I feel about him and what turns my life took after meeting him...he dives into my work, he takes it on his tongue and plays with the sweet sour lollipop that my poems are. Metaphorically, it's as if we plant seeds together, not in the soil but grafting them in the roots themselves. Inspiration comes from observing the spontaneity in people, their venerations for different things and an acceptance of their idiosyncrasies. Then there are so many friends and mentors who've motivated me. That is all how I get spontaneous, involuntary inspiration. But poetry is also a conscious process and hence I must *look* for inspiration. This I find in the environment and other poets. I search for it, by being open to observation and discovering new poetries. I have been inspired by the unfussy depth of Wislawa Szymborska, Sylvia Plath's immense heart and the metaphoric life of her poetry related to painful realities, poems by Siegfried Sassoon, A.K. Ramanujan, R. M. Rilke, Pablo Neruda, and most recently I am discovering the German expressionistic poets like Gottfried Benn and Else Lasker-Schuler. These poetries are like riding a giant wheel, like going up and coming down in a circle, dangling your feet that won't

touch the ground and being awed by the enthusiasm of these poets.

Q. I must say I find your poetry awe-inspiring! When do you feel that you write your best poetry?

A. MKB: My most satisfying poems come from phases when I'm vexed. I think it is because we usually indulge in masking our emotions. When I experience strong emotions that have not had an outlet, I sometimes write poetry. My most cherished poems ironically belong to such phases. It might be because at that time I'm true to myself, or maybe because my brain is working in a different way. But emotions alone cannot generate poetry. There has to be something in store in one's perceptual space and philosophical core for the poem to shape up. When I write a poem under the influence of emotions, I usually don't know what I'm writing about. The first few lines are spontaneous jottings and then the poem automatically begins to shape up into a more or less coherent whole. Then, I come to understand what is within me and after the initial spurting beginning, I get a middle and end that I can use to shape my poem. It is here that I understand what is most prior in my thinking. Talking of a poem, we usually don't divide it into a beginning, middle and end. These categories have been traditionally reserved for drama and sometimes prose too. Poetry is a breaking of barriers. It is free and hence it should not have structural constraints. The beginning, middle and end in a poem for me, does not mean a sort of structural division, but a division in the change of mindset when one is writing. The workings of one's psyche shift and reshape as one writes a poem. This reshaping has a flow and hence the allusion to Aristotle's dramatic beginning, middle and end.

Q. Excellent. We could go in a hundred directions with that. Would you care to share one of your own favorite poems?

Alone

A door in a frame lies by the roadside,
Twisted at an angle, like a convex glass,
Only, it is too full for the sun rays to pass
But somehow the air focuses its lens on it
And burns it from the inside
People see and think that it is termites eating wood
This door is sans house, or hands to open
It, or footsteps to walk through it
Now and then some wind comes
And opens a crack between the door
A smile twisted into smoke
Comes out and the wind mourns
Dust collects on it, it endures rains and
No one comes to fix it back
Because it is skin shed from
Muscles and bones
But there is always something left behind
Here is a door with its eyes waiting to
Thread dreams walking through itself

Q. Very nice selection from Lives of My Love. Something unique about this particular collection is that you included a few of your own bright symbolic watercolor paintings to accompany some of your poems. Do you find it more likely that your poetry inspires you to create visual art, or is it more likely that your art inspires a poem as you paint it, and why do you think that is?

A. MKB: I think in my case my poetry usually inspires art, rather than the other way round. I paint the image in the environment that triggered the poem and at the same time try to bring in the thrust of the poem into it. When I paint an image after writing a poem, I have dwelt on it, given it a linguistic form and solidified it; then only the space and colors need to be consciously thought of.

Q. Your poetry is alive and blossoming with imagery. What do you consider most inspiring visually or otherwise, what sprouts your imagination?

A. MKB: In writing my poems I lay a lot of emphasis on figures of speech. It's probably to do with my painting; because when one paints one begins to observe. Somehow I think we derive pleasure from beauty. In the case of poetry this pleasure is extended to the not so apparently beautiful. One begins to see beauty in many ordinary things. I incidentally find some works of literature very inspiring simply because of the beauty they infuse into the images. To name a few that come to the mind: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Toni Morrison's novels- especially *Tar Baby* and *Sula*, T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Wasteland", Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, the expressionistic poets etc. Images whether in literature, movies, paintings and most commonly in day to day life, are very inspiring for me; they somehow infuse me with imagination because as a poet suddenly I'm reading new meanings into things that were not even in my creative radar.

Q. What I respect about your poetry, even beyond your fine natural balance of heart, mind and soul, is that it contains genuine depth - it rings true to your truth with nothing hollow. (I trust that you can elaborate on this; choose your angle.)

A. MKB: Poetry cannot be shallow, because then it will lose its strength. It is jam packed and heavy but has lightness enclosed in its heaviness as its other Janus face. I think the natural balance we are talking about in my poetry comes from spontaneity, from scribbling the first draft completely from within, without much second thought; and yet it's not like free association. Then, when I read what I have written, I understand it from several

perspectives- from the original perspective, but also from several other viewpoints that have unconsciously propped themselves in the poem. This makes up for one truth leading to another. And because the truths are mine, they are interrelated. The truth, and the voice in poetry go together. And since the truth is so difficult to comprehend, since it is always transforming, evasive, its immensity engrained in minuteness, it is deep. When I tap immensity or the minuteness that carries it, the poetry automatically gets its depth.

Q. You're right, and your response brings a few thoughts to mind: Firstly, some of your poetry sounds dream-inspired. Do you pen your dreams into poetry? If yes, then how important do you feel this is, and why?

A. MKB: I feel poetry is inter-textual and like other literature, it is connected to other disciplines, because it is related holistically to our experience. Your question reminds me of psychoanalysis, especially Freud's dream interpretation. There have been several studies I believe on the coexistence and relation of art to dreams. I do pen my dreams into poetry, parts of them, if not the complete dream. In my poem, "The Years without You", from the book *Lives of My Love*, I remember a dream from early childhood that I could not forget because it was almost like living paradise:

There is a fairyland, in a dream I have not forgotten
 Flowing slow fountains on its body
 Where flowers suspend from the sky in a rain
 The grass is blue and there is a tinge of pink in the
 sky
 Every monsoon I relived the dream
 Until your eyes blinked open in its sky
 And the colours came back to their place
 Lovely; my mind sees something akin to a Joseph
 Parker painting...

A. MKB: I feel myself lucky if I remember my dreams and if they are emotionally intense; but that is occasional. My poetry is dream-like because maybe it has a lot of symbolization and that makes it like a collection of anecdotes which is also true for dreams. Also, my poems are somewhat less than natural. They aren't what reality is to our usually busy senses. Rather, they are like an unconscious delving into the superficiality of what we take to be reality. Beneath the superficial, reality has another life. It is almost like delving into the unconscious that is deep-seated and like an iceberg, is beneath the surface and only a tip of it is available to sight. What lies beneath the ocean is massive and that is what poetry should fathom. This reminds me of my first collection with Middle Island Press, *Windows to the Ocean*; maybe that is where my poetry follows dream and trance.

Responding to the second part of your question, I think all poetry essentially requires mazes and incompleteness, a middle of the road termination too, so that we are almost always ready to relive it. Like dreams, our poetry is spontaneous and effortless. It just comes to us, sometimes, we feel, from nowhere. This birth from nowhere is like a seed hibernating in the soil. We don't see it unless it props up like a shoot. Also, if a poem speaks too directly, either without symbolism, imagery, metaphors or such devices, it loses an essential part of its suggestiveness. Thus dreaming literally or metaphorically is at the core of good poetry.

Q. Exquisite, Mohineet! Thank you. Secondly (back up a few paragraphs), I am drawn to your statement "...because the truths are mine, they are interrelated." My mind sees a web with you at the center, reminding me of the creative arachnid symbol, and I feel that you have justified yourself as a poet in the most beautiful subjective way in

what you so naturally stated. Your poetry is a solidified matrix of you. Would you mind sharing another poem?

- A. **MKB:** Thank you for the wonderful observation Christina. That's true I believe. The self, establishes my poems on a plinth of the external. Thus what is within and what is without come together when a poem is being written. The 'I' can never really exit completely in a poem, and some amount of deep role playing while writing a poem happens. It is like drama; you play a role but every actor would play the same role with idiosyncratic stamps. Coming to truths, I believe that there is no single truth over time and space that is true for all human race. The truths of a poet while writing are much different from the truths we carry with us in routine lives. This is because, as I have mentioned earlier, the truth of poetry is very intrinsic and deep-seated. I would love to share a poem with you:

A Love Story

You birthed me an organ from your arms
You endured the pain of the sky pushing its way out
-The infinite- that once hibernated under my tongue
Now wishfully enfolds me into a fire ball
You carried the heat on your back
To rejuvenate the dying winter
Its juices seeped into your spine and
Collected into an ocean
From where a story may emerge
Suddenly, in a whirlwind
And sweep the city clean
But we'll always be in its single monster eye,
Rooted; while the city floats, cracks like a dream
In its gorilla embrace
All stories come glowing out of your sun
With you, my shadow widens into a shade
Then into a dream with no ends

The dream of sunburnt soil begins from the feet
And now we realize, only to forget again,
“The garden is never grown from above,
It is always waiting below with closed eyes”

Q. You have a list of honors and awards to your credit that is no less than astounding. What do you feel has been your greatest academic or literary achievement?

A. MKB: Thank you Christina for the wonderful applauds for my literary achievements. I believe there is still a long way to go and my achievements are merely a brushing of some archaeological pits in me. The big achievements are still to come as (I hope) my poetic side is slowly and continuously revealed to me. I am always extremely happy on publishing a book. I published my first when I was 21; and though it was highly experimental, I was so enthused by it that I slept with a copy under my pillow for several days.

Q. That’s adorable. :) What is the title of your first book, and can it be found online?

A. My first book is *Poems That Never Were*, published in 2007. I’m sorry, it’s not available online for purchase.

Q. So Poems That Never Were is unavailable. How humorously apropos, the title. I can respect that, though. What are your long-term literary aspirations?

A. MKB: In the coming years, I plan to publish more books of poetry and get some more strength and sound into my poems. I want my poems to be enthused in a reflexive, relaxed way. At present I feel my poetry has more pace than I love. I also plan to complete my PhD in the next four years; it would make me more critical and give me a wider evaluative space to understand poetry.

Q. Certainly, and I wish you the strongest wings for your developments. Your ambition is incredible and I am certain that you will arrive where you wish to be, that you will continue to dream your dreams into reality.

A. MKB: Thank you Christina, it was such an insightful talk.
[Christina raises her mug to Mohineet who takes her cappuccino "...with extra chocolate powder on top."]

BOOK REVIEWS

**Review of Nikitha Hingad's
*Philia and Sophia***

by

CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY

(Philia and Sophia, The Book of Love and Wisdom, Nikitha Hingad, Patridge India, 2015, pp. 163, price: Rs 900.)

Philia and Sophia, is a book of verse by Nikitha Hingad, a Bangaluru based, young graduate in commerce but her poems are set to discover deeper realities of life, philosophy and mystical experiences, when she chooses a subject like love. To Nikitha poetry is not only a craft but passion and life. To her poetry comes as “tears”, “blood”, “sweat”, “aura and “soul”. The book under review is, indeed, a book of love and wisdom. Nikitha presents in this compilation, a bouquet of love in all its hues and inner fragrance, which is a source of perennial beauty, joy and wisdom. To her love is celebration of life in its all forms. As one moves from one poem to another, one gets enchanted with the rhythm of her verse, wisdom of words and spontaneity of emotions. There is “spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions” marked by subtlety of vision, grandeur and poise. She writes in preface to this book, “*I write for no reason / I write for every season.*” These words suggest veracity, felicity

and depth of her natural feelings, and above all, the immensity and scope of the subject under discussion.

The opening lines of this book, serves as prelude to it “This book is titled *Philiaand Sophia*, derived from Greek words, “philia”, literal meaning love and ‘Sophia’ meaning wisdom. Although, Philia is often seen as friendship or fondness, but here I have described Philia as romantic love. Philia-Sophia roughly translated in English shall mean love for wisdom i.e. philosophy”. Nikitha raises a host of issues, pertaining to sagacity of wisdom in love, altruism, serenity, humility, tenacity, integrity and purity of love. She explores different states of emotions, to delve deeper into sights, sighs and sounds of love which is ephemeral and ubiquitous. One can discern the supremacy of calmness over circumstances, philosophical urge, and depth of feelings in many of her poems. Love here is abstract, expressed in myriad forms; flesh melting into sublimity of the divine, desire afflicted with pangs of separation, joy of union, natural human instinct, heavenly, and unconditional requisition of the self with the other. One can see, the glitch of flirtations here and there, but there is sudden dramatic shift from flirtations to seriousness of spirit. The pangs and slings, undying devotion of the beloved to her lover, keeps her closer to the medieval potess, Mira Bai. Nikitha lends a thought to every feeling and a colour to her every imagination, which makes her a great poet of our time. As Nikitha says in the preface to this book: “The compilation comprises of couplets, quadruplet, quotes, haiku, diamante, lyrical to free style of poetry”. She further adds “Some poems deliver a deep message, some are light hearted for casual reading”.(p xiv)

However, all poems in this collection keep the readers absorbed, demanding least from them. They are exposed to different shades of emotions and poetic forms with unabated flow of inner rhythm and ease. Undoubtedly, Nikitha strings pearls of love in its all immensity cutting across time and space. One can discern here the love of a teenager, adult love,

courtship, and self-less love with undying devotion. Her romantic vision is later overlapped by serenity and sagacity of Sufi strains. To her love is panacea to all evils in this world. These lines from her poem titled "Power of love", "*the darkness within / Sorrows are washed away by happiness, show the purgatory nature When love flows like a river and seeps within / Cleansing the hatred and bitterness, / Then the light erases of love*". She celebrates ubiquitousness and power of love in many of her poems. She assigns the importance of giving in love and cherishes sacrifice as a condition to love. In the poem titled, "The Proposal", she writes "*Give me love: I'll give you my life*". Here she is mimetic, and recreates the wisdom of Rahim, a medieval poet underlining the importance of sacrifice in love "Love neither grows in the field, nor sold in the mart/ King or commoner, whosoever likes/must sacrifice for it". Her poem titled "Love" envisages a world characterized by happiness, fearlessness and freedom. To her love is a supreme bliss granted to human beings by God. It gets manifested in all particles of the universe. To quote her "*If love was the ocean, I 'd turn into fish; / If love was the wind; / I 'd turn into a bird / If love was fire, I 'd burn into ash / If love was fire, I 'd burn into ash / If love was the poetry, I'd become every word*". The desire for love in her poetry is not Foucauldian desire conserved by the physical and psychological energies, but a natural instinct, which resides in every heart and mind as a source of strength and fulfilment. These lines from the above poem explain her longing for love, "*In a planet of billion souls we all want to belong to someone / someone we can call our own / we name this someone our soulmate / whom we are searching in every life*".(6) To her reservoir of nature, lending them purity, power and grace. In a poem titled "Departed", one can hear the strokes and pangs and loneliness of an alienated self. In the last two lines, her waiting becomes tireless, seeking pleasure in pain: "*And now, I wait for him at doorstep / with ears listening to each footstep*".(p12) The same intensity of feelings and tireless waiting for the lover rings through "Break up and make up".

In poems named “Hugs and kisses” love becomes hallucinatory in nature:” *Yourhug is my drug/Addictive,/ Seductive,/ Hallucinating,/ Fascinating/Yourtouch,/Ouch!/A Right clutch*”(22).

In another poem titled “Have you ever met someone?”, she shows merger of two souls, meeting of two minds, striking a perfect understanding: “*Have you met someone, someone, who choruses your thoughts*”. The firmness of love has been conceived in beautiful imagery; ‘earth standing still’, cool ‘rushing water’, and ‘air which is always there, everywhere’ (57).” In Path of Love’, ‘Lover’, ‘Crave for love’, she repeats the same notes of love as a source of happiness, bliss and courage. In ‘Embrace’ and other poems, the poet shows a strong desire for physical and psychic proximity, but there is ultimate triumph of eternal quest over desire for sexuality.

Other poems in this compilation titled “Faith’, ‘Father’, “The Art of living”, “Home Sweet home”, ‘forgiveness’, ‘An ode to friend’, ‘Balance of life’, ‘Beyond Religion’, ‘In the realms of earth, Nikitha touches upon numerous themes of life, nature, environment, art of living and human relationship which show her sensitivity to her surroundings. In all these poems, the philosopher in her comes alive. She verbalises the intricacies of life, human relationship and importance of being humane. Like Wordsworth she extends the metaphor of the kingdom of poetry to tell that the greatest poetry comes from the simplicity of life, words and spontaneity of emotions. Her images are pure and natural, she doesn’t borrow these from other poets but these evolve out of human nature which she understands at her best. Her understanding is clear and unclouded by doubts, distractions and fear. It is this quality which lends objectivity to her verses. The idea of love is cerebral but scenes, sights and sounds which she creates in her poems fill our mind with joy and tranquillity.

Nikitha in her poems titled ‘Being a woman’, ‘I Walk alone’, ‘My veil’, ‘Mother’, celebrates motherhood, womanhood

and dignity of her gender. One can discern the voice of self-defiance and affirmation running through the inner voice of all these poems. In a poem titled "Veil", her voice grows ironical as she holds the armour of defiance against the stereotypical notions of patriarchal society: "*My veil is not an imposed duty/ It is not a restriction/But it is a symbolic beauty /It is my conviction*". "I Walk alone" is a poem celebrating the dignity of self against the tides of the world. This poem reflects high self-esteem, determination and courage of conviction of the protagonist: "*I walk alone with goal in front, unaware of destiny/I walk alone between crumbs of joys and bits of sorrows/I walk alone with memories and reveries/I walk alone I walk alone...*" In "Mother" she exalts the virtue of a woman as an angelic figure of sacrifice not as weakness but adulation. "*She is a temple of sacrifice/She is an angel from paradise/ Her aura creates magic/Her wand expels tragic*". Here a woman becomes an epitome of human virtues, rising to divine love and shield of protection " *...like an armour of defence/Shielding your innocence*".

Undoubtedly, *Philia and Sophia* is a book of love and wisdom. Love in this compilation is characterized by variety, immensity, tenderness and timeless elegance. Nikitha's all poems in this book are like pollens of flower, just as pollen contains life and beauty and vibrate with alertness, truth and inner fragrance, these poems too manifest their inner fragrance. All her poems represent different voices of the same reality, lending the monologic text polyphonic voices. Monologic because the voice of the narrator is dominant and it suppresses the moans and groans in the background. The entire text running from page one to the last page reads like a monologic epic of love, wisdom and philosophy. A true philosopher is also a poet at heart, and divorced from good neither philosophy, poetry nor even society can survive. The philosopher in Nikitha artistically recreates the wisdom contained in ancient and medieval Indian literary and philosophical sources. Her poems

are pollens of life- altruism, compassion, grace from which a new life receives breath. These poems set on a search of a society of human beings, where love grows and endures, to create, and not to destroy. Though repetitive in its theme i.e. love, this book never bores you. The book is full of words of love and wisdom, polyphonic voices mingling with the serenity and meditative consciousness of the narrator, weave a rhythm, a pattern of love, longing and life. Though polyphonic voices ring through the poems, but these voices are integrated with the main subject of the book. A human being thinks, feels and wills, and a synthesis of all these acts forms the passions of their heads and hearts. This book of verse is full of these elements which enrich our minds with aesthetic pleasure and wisdom contained in the scriptures. I RECOMMEND THIS BOOK FOR EVERY REASON OR NO REASON. THE PLEASURE IS YOURS.

Review of C. L, Khatri's *Two-Minute Silence*

by

DR. RAJIV RANJAN DWIVEDI

*(Two Minute Silence, C. L, Khatri, Authorspress,
Q-2 A, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi, 2014. ISBN
978-81-7273-920-1, Pp 81, Rs 195/-)*

C. L. Khatri is a perceptive critic, editor and bilingual poet writing in both Hindi and English. *Two Minute Silence* is Khatri's third poetry collection after *Kargil* (2000) and *Ripples in the Lake* (2006). It won't be hyperbolic to maintain that the collection of poems is an assertive endeavour to redefine poetry with all its subtleties aesthetically ensured. If poetry is a holistic medium to communicate, the collection under discussion best serves the purpose. The innovative use of language stands out as a distinctive signature of Khatri who with his uncanny vision and extraordinary poetic sensibility is not only able to conjure up language but is also quite proficient in creating cross-cultural space shared by twenty first century readership across the globe. While on the one hand, the multiplicity of inter-literary allusions signifies the classist tendency like that of T.S.Eliot, on the other hand, typically chosen individual subjects with wild imagination scattered through language and thought draws close parallel to romantic spirit of writing. In fact, the maverick style of Khatri wherein he deftly dovetails the typically traditional topics across chronological line with skilled linguistic idiom of the time does not fairly lend to any specific categorisation of his as a poet.

So, it would be rather sensible to call him a post post-modern, magical, realist, romantic poet-all rolled into one.

That poetry is born of angst and anxiety, pain and suffering is justified by a large number of poems contained in the collection, *Two-Minute Silence* by C.L. Khatri. The poem, *Government Schools* is one such deliberate choice compelled by the hilarious circumstances that characterise such schools in India. The closing expression 'the poet cries, the future fucking' is an expression of utter disgruntlement of the poet who is left disillusioned with the stark realities of government organisations. 'The use of 'fucking future' is not only linguistically contemporary but also semantically melancholic.

One of the prominent features of Khatri's creative corpus is his use of dialectal expression. The entire collection is replete with wondrous use of culture specific words and idioms. The words like *chulha*, *sattu*, *haahaakaar*, etc. are a select few expressions which conspicuously cater to the specific readership.

Variety of the subjects is one of the prime characteristics of the collection, *Two-Minute Silence*. Some of the poems are highly reflective while some others are quite rich in detail. The poems like *Homage to Maa*, *The Falgun* and *The Paeon to Patliputra* effortlessly thrive on the richness of detail while simultaneously acquainting the readers with the native traditional heritage which surfaces apparently in many other poems as well. But the description as untypical of poetry is superseded by the invective critique of the socio-political order rendered in most poetic idioms befitting the purpose. The expression like 'There is truth eclipsed in truth' in the poem, *Poetic Justice* is not only reminiscent of 'word within a word, unable to speak the word' in Eliot's *Gerontion* but is also emphatic in communication of truth 'swaddled' with mist of nebulous decisions. It seems as if Eliot is reborn in Khatri to perpetuate the grave concerns of post modern dilemma which takes over all decisive actions of humanity.

That literature is a cultural manifestation and culture is bi-product of literature is amply justifiable in Khatri's collection of poems under discussion. *Two-Minute Silence* is a reflective compendium of cultural practices nourished by the moisture of mythical references without which any cultural merit would remain incomplete. Poets across time and space have spoken of cultural immensity in their works to the extent that the poetic corpus is most often considered a cultural study rather than a mere poetic flight of fancy. Khatri too as a seasoned poet endowed with profound cultural sensibility incorporates many an organ of culture with requisite linguistic expressions conveying the nuances contained therein. The poems like *Vijayadashmi*, *Holi*, *Ahilya's Astra*, *JogiJi Wah JogiJi*, *Hell on the Hill*, to name a few, best communicate the cultural ethos of place signified by the use of typically culture specific terms like *Jogiji*, *sindur*, *bhang*, *thandai*, *sarara* etc. Khatri's choice of festivals and rituals for poetic composition is not made for the glorification thereof, nor is it made to exhibit his cultural taste and scholarship, but it is deliberately chosen to revisit the context with the reformative vision of a poet. Hence, the wry humour and dry sarcasm qualify each mythical reference taken up in the collection.

Historical sense as stated by Eliot is what asserts the merit of a creative writer of great order. Khatri's sense of history is very much palpable in some of his poems. The poems like *Bull's Reaction*, *Beads and Ballads* and *New Invention* in particular are but the literary manifesto of impeccable historical sense of Khatri who exploits it as a tool to set up the link between a worried, irritated man and a gifted creative poet. By maintaining proper aesthetic distance, Khatri is able to distinguish the identity of the man who suffers from the artist who creates. Deceptively plain verses like 'on the margin stand Ashoka trees/ Beheaded looking like torso' are in fact quite interrogative if approached closely. The historical reference with contemporaneous treatment compels profound reflection

characteristic of any grave literary pursuit both as a reader and a writer.

Linguistic expertise as pointed out in the beginning of the review is what we may call the USP of Khatri's *Two- Minute Silence*. It becomes even more efficacious when tremendous experiments go effortlessly into making of an appropriate language pattern corresponding to the diverse range of complex subjects undertaken in the collection. His frequent use of code-switching without any transliteral endeavour signifies his linguistic deftness employed to achieve the literary communication as required by the context. Still more interesting is the innovative incorporation of cultural idioms into English syntactic structure. Expressions like '*lying in his samskar*', '*om shanty om*', '*Ram Naam Satyhai*', '*Started tandav*', '*giving us thekua*', '*The peon pranamed*' are few examples of linguistic wonders that the collection records. They simultaneously unravel the cultural contour of the nation as well.

Literature is universally defined as the mirror of society. It shows and should show the ills of socio-temporal mundane realities. But to relegate literature to the mere function of exposing the drabness of the society is not only a hackneyed impression but also little too much of underestimating its dynamic reformative potential. As such, literature is not only the mirror of society but also the creator of a society worth living for mankind. The altruistic end of literature is achieved by the well informed, refined and creative sensibility of the writer who is acutely sensitive to the disturbing concerns of people in general. Khatri's *Two-Minute Silence* in this regard redefines literature in general and poetry in particular in so far as it attempts to expose the malaise of the time and critique the predicament of post-modern human phenomenon. But the manifest optimism of the poet transcends his awareness of dismal circumstances which compel his poetic verve. Like Eliot of *Gerontion*, again, who believes that 'Christ the tiger would

come in the juvenescence of the year', Khatri is able to foresee the good time when he says: 'Don't despair the old year' and 'Three cheers for change'.

The entire collection under discussion records the clear influence of T.S. Eliot in both the thematic choices and linguistic treatment thereof. At times, it appears as if the semantics and the syntax of his poems are modelled on the creative base of Eliot's poetic corpus. Poems like *Peaceful Soul*, *The Falgu*, *Flower of Opium* and above all, *Two-Minute Silence* for the choice of themes, and expressions like 'mixing memory and desire', 'a crow defecates on his head', 'But a woman is etherised upon the table' and 'There is a truth beyond this truth', to choose a few from the collection, evoke a sharp memory of Eliot's works signifying thereby the identical problematics of time pervading across the spaces the treatment of which would have been otherwise unfair without an already tested linguistic idiom at the hands of none other but Eliot himself. Here the purpose of Khatri in doing so is to effect verisimilitude by drawing thematic and linguistic parallel with Eliot rather than to strike merely a semblance with the great artist of literature.

The title of the collection, *Two-Minute Silence* is particularly remarkable for its profound sensitivity expressed for the disturbingly changing phenomena of the socio-cultural reality that prevails in India in the name of development. Highly elegiac in nature, the poem manifests poignant sarcasm mingled with sad realism. Once again, as a critique of degenerating values, the poem evokes the memory of T.S. Eliot noted for his deep worries for deteriorating socio-moral values in Western European society. But Khatri in his creative endeavour goes a step further by striking contemporaneity when he comments on the predicament of post-modern concept of global or rather global vision of the world:

Let's observe two-minute silence
On the shrinking space, shrinking sun

Stinking water of the sacred rivers
Sleeping birds, falling leaves
Watermelon being sliced for quarrelling cousins.
(*Two-Minute Silence*, 68)

Khatri's poems are tremendously evocative integrating what Matthew Arnold terms 'poetic truth' and 'poetic beauty'. If 'poetic truth' and 'poetic beauty' account for the actual merit of poetry, the 'Haiku' section of *Two-Minute Silence* best serves the purpose. Capitalising on the economy of words as characteristic of Haiku form of poetry, Khatri's creativity justifies what is universally acknowledged as "Brevity is soul of expression" or "Language is the art of concealing thoughts'. The imaginative wonder of the poet can go to the extent of making 'Gandhi escaped Godse's bullet/ committed suicide.' While some of his haikus unravel mysterious truth such as 'Smile on the face/death reveals more than his life/man and his mask', others thrive on quite a lateral thinking inverting the commonly believed idea such as 'Beware of dogs/dogs revolt holding placard/beware of men.' That hypocrisy, double standard, pathetic irony etc. are the timeless subjects of literature are still more efficaciously strewn in the little bouquet of haikus in the collection. 'Poets stand at crossroads/ Cultivating crops of cough/for posterity', 'Cactus grows flowers'/ and / 'Education means/migration from the village/gaps and Diaspora'/ are a select few from the heavenly haikus that are not only aesthetically rich enough but are also equally profound in sensitising the readers about the changing ways of the world.

Two-Minute Silence by Khatri, I must acknowledge, calls for two minute dip into the profound sea of sentiments and poetry exuberantly blended together. Reflecting upon the contours of time, taking cultural ethos in its stride, the collection emerges as a timeless creation for lovers of literature in general and poetry in particular.

Review of Chandra Shekhar Dubey's *Real Resonance – The Unreal Mind*

by

DR. RAJNISH MISHRA

(Real Resonance – The Unreal Mind (Collection of Poems), Chandra Shekhar Dubey, Shambhai, The Third Eye Imprint, ISBN: 9789384180287, pp. 50, Rs. 150)

Chandra Shekhar Dubey's *Real Resonance – The Unreal Mind* invites the reader to surmise over its very title and its evocation of an Eliotesque world of images. The contrapuntal play of real-unreal sets the tone for what comes in the poems with “love, illusion, social issues, women questions to humanism, spiritualism and epiphanies” as their themes (Dubey 7). The anthology, surprisingly traditional despite its modernism, begins with the traditional invocation to the muse, albeit, a personal one:

Your smile invokes the muse
hidden in my thoughts
and I sing a song that touches your heart
cutting across the barriers
which knows no art,
but flows eternally from strings of heart, (“Muse”, 15)

The variously alluding “Patches Of Clouds” is a kind of amalgamation of the romantic celebration of nature and the imagist concreteness of visions. “Clouds” is a direct continuation of the images in the previous poem and, in a way, its companion poem too:

Dark patches emerge stealing
 The gaze of hibernating moon
 As mountainous piles
 Rise leaving behind the thin
 Streaks of smoke puffed
 By speeding rocket, (18)

The ever enigmatic clouds, like active agents, form images of “voyeuristic dreams and desires”(18).

The “Voice of a Woman” is a kind of manifesto song, majestic in its Whitman like voice’s simplicity. The woman speaks after ages and in her own voice too. She avers: “I am not a plaything. I am source of creation, I wield the forces of destruction too” (19). The poem ends with a God like affirmation after negation: “I am, what I am”. “Another Nirbhaya” must have begun as a topical poem, yet, in its present form, it goes way beyond the specifics. It establishes the particular as symbolic and gives it transcendental powers. That’s the alchemy of poetry and what it’s capable of achieving in good hands.

The anthology’s range of subjects for its poems surprises by its fearlessness and variety. In choosing for its theme the “Lesser Children Of God” the poet has unconsciously declared his Romantic core. With a Blake like virtuosity does he etch their picture, sans any comments from the narrator as none is needed:

Pitiless gazes, venomous spits
 greet us every morning
 As we sell incense sticks, mopes,
 hot glossy magazines
 To our unwilling clients all in hope
 of two bare meals.

Of course the tour de force comes with “*Waxed lovely faces,* shrinking /in the sleeve of their *paramours* /In the rear seat of waxed speedy cars” (22 [italics mine]). In one breath does the

speaker indict, comment and pass judgement upon not only individuals but also the society in toto. Like the chimney sweepers they dream too, but unlike them, their dreams they see "... the bread /climbing slowly like full moon /In the deep sky" (22).

"Void" is a poem of dual ethos: an Indian sensibility in the modern (western) garb. The idiom remains modern but the subject matter is gleaned from the fields of the Indian mythology in its journey "from shunya to shristi" (23), and also from Troy and Hiroshima. In keeping with the poem on the lesser children comes "Tribal Woman". The narrator, though deceptively impartial through the poem, passes oblique and scathing remarks though vivid and strong images, like the one in which the mother

...gleans through moth-eaten,
dried leaves, ferns and figs
dates, grains, pulpy roots,
the life-less berries to feed her rickety child
waiting for food, glued to the distant rocks.(25)

"Parliament Of Owls" brings to mind the *Parlement of Fowles*, ergo allegory. And allegorical it is. The wolves and tigers and lions of the forest are not at all alien or novel, neither is the owl that prophetically hoots(!) in a pot pourri of poetic strains:

...like blowing trumpets
through the nocturnal parliament,
condemning the ways of God, and animal
to the meek and the weak... (27)

Is this an unwilling and innocent parody of Chaucer, Donne, Milton and Shelley or simply the anxiety of influence manifest?

"My Lost Old Home" is a poem of poignancy and nostalgia that find their home in every human heart. The age old struggle of the natural and the artificial, the wilt of urbanization over

the literally and metaphorically green rural and the shocking and breaking change are all delineated very well in the poem. The poem, after contrasting the old with the new, the past with the present and the village with the city, ends hauntingly with: “my old home was lost /but it lives in my childhood, it lives in me” (30).

“Illusion”, “Delusion” and “Wisdom” must be read together. In the first reading they do not give any semblance of cohesion but by the second joint reading the threads of their bond start unravelling themselves separately. The range of subjects that fill the pages of the anthology brings it closer to our times and homes with “Aam Aadmi” which naturally marches on to “Delhi” where “Tombs, castles, minarets relive the death /Of kings, emperors, and hapless destitute”(38). From national seas the anthology moves on to the international waters, to the “Killing of 20000 dolphins in Japan” (40). The poem “Brutal Killing” begins like any other ode. It begins as an ode to dolphin and then descends to the underworld and reveals the heart of darkness without sparing even the goriest of details.

“A Ragpicker” speaks in his own voice, like the tribal woman earlier, and tells his story – history. The poem, not so surprisingly, and like the other children poem/s ends with a dream: “In dream, I throw my dust smeared body into relief / Seeking apology for my existence.” (42).

The poet’s commitment to lend voice to the hitherto mute is absolute. His attention is especially strong on those who are the weakest of the weak. “Draupadi” and “Silence” are two poems that attempt to speak for female subjects, performing the function that comes naturally to them.

The anthology is concluded with “Peace”. Krishna, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Gandhi and Mira dance in joy over the space that the poem provides their ideas of love and peace: the one message that India, the *Vishwa Guru*, has for the world.

**Review of Tripti Sharan, Neeti Banga
and Abhijit Narayan's
*The Dew Drops: A Journey Begins***

by

CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY

The Dew Drops: A Journey Begins (An Anthology of Poems), Tripti Sharan, Neeti Banga and Abhijit Narayan, Authorspress, New Delhi, 2015, pp. 143, price: Rs 225.

This anthology is an unique endeavour of three poets who come from different professions but their mission is the same, creating a world of human sensibility and objectivity out of their respective world of lived experiences and subjectivity, and then reaching at a destination, where the boundaries of subjectivity get blurred, and their poetic vision looms large rendering music and soul to their words. The three poets on this poetic rendezvous are namely Tripti Sharan, a gynaecologist, Neeti Banga, a fashion professional and Abhijit Narayan, a corporate lawyer. As the blurb of this book truly records "This book on poetry is a reflection of the diversity of the human emotions yet is woven around a common string of love and compassion". All these three professionals are published poets and they collectively create a world of humanism, sensibility and tenderness, which dissolves the mundane worries and diverse tensions arising out of their professional tussles, into a world of poetic aestheticism and tranquillity. Here the poet's mind seems to be only a medium rather than a personality, they insist on separating the man and the poet, experience and art, thereby they transform and lose their personal meanings into

objective meaning. Mahesh Bhatt, the famous film maker and writer has written the foreword to this book. He writes with distinct boldness “It is the effort of these three poets in this book that moved me, not what it would weigh on my literary weighing machine. The ability to chart through one’s mundane profession and yet keep the torch of passion burning, is what counts”. I shall discuss each poet separately.

The first poet in this book, is Tripti Sharan, to whom poetry is a means to humanitarian solitude, discovery of new sensibilities out of human compulsions. She writes “Poetry has been very generous to me and has made me grow as a human being”. There are twenty five poems of her in this book, which range from love, nature, desire and pertinent social issues to historical and mythic character. Tripti sees from the depth of her heart all these aspects with clinical eyes. The first poem titled ‘Water’ is written in memory of her mother, who died of kidney failure. This poem celebrates water as a source of healing, a life giving force, a cleansing agent, a sustainer and giver. It flows perennially and in its continuity lies the resurgenceof hope and life. She further sees it, as a destructive agent, in Byronic sense the wild ferocity of nature unleashed in all its cruelty. To quote the poet, “I saw your anger in tsunami waves, I felt your wrath on the Himalayan caves, You reacted worse, Did we encroach on your turf”? The last lines of the poem evoke memory of poet’s mother who died of kidney failure “Thirsty for you she died, Craving for you she died, Oh water! Why did you deprive her so...” The whole poem can be read as celebration of different forms of water as baptiser, purifier, creator and destroyer. The poet under discussion is a doctor, she perceives water also as body fluid, the very basis of life, plasma. Here, she lends a scientific meaning to significance of water as a life sustaining force. In another poem “Being Alive”, she talks about a chronically ill patient benumbed by the fear of death. To this patient, the poet sees, a death in life and she succinctly brings the debate of euthanasia alive. These lines beautifully capture the tone,

temperament and sufferings of the patient, who has lost all hopes of survival and seeks a release in death, "Resigned to fate, Rejected by life, The hope getting dim, My thoughts equally grim". The poem begins and ends with patient's defeatist reveries of escape where death seems to be only solution. One can perceive that the poet on a journey, is filled with elements of fear, magic, dreams, adventures and self-discovery as one moves from one poem to another. However, there is real depth of complexity of ideas enshrined in the words and images. "The Scarred Man", "Dreams", "The Lonely Bridge", "Love's Labour", "The Interlude", "The Dream-Maker" and many other poems in this collection by Tripti lead us to poetic sagacity of wisdom and diversity of emotions. In a poem titled "The Cursed Youth", she beautifully captures the enigma and delusion of a modern youth caught between aspirations and reality. One can read an existential note of alienation, rebellion and futility in this poem. Besides, love, romance, adventure and desires, readers can see a spiritual yearning in Tripti's poems, "The Lonely Saint" and "Stranger Shouting in the Dark", are poems filled with philosophical interrogations on materialism, delusion and inner darkness of human soul. The lonely saint is disgusted of the material world and seeks refuge in spiritual world of asceticism. The stranger shouting in dark is representative of the complex psyche of contemporary world, in which the mounting pressures escalate to outburst in anger and wild human behaviour. This is predicament of a contemporary protagonist caught into the vortex of host of existential, moral and spiritual questions to which there is no single answer. The darkness of the night is metaphorical darkness of human soul devoid of inner resources of love, compassion and wisdom. Tripti creates a dramatic persona in the unknown protagonist shouting in dark, which resembles Matthew Arnold's character in "Dover Beach" who stands perplexed, bewildered and ignorant caught into inner and spiritual darkness. The poem, in fact, is as much as a portrait of the stranger. There is schism between the outwardly non-

aggressive behaviour that he adopts, and the sense of a tormented, disintegrated self, verging on insanity. “The Barren Land” evokes the alienation, sterility and meaninglessness of life like that of Eliot’s “The Waste Land”. It is a beautifully crafted poem depicting the barrenness of modern life itself. The poem unfolds a set of well chosen images suggesting the deceits, illusions and restlessness in desert like life. In the last stanza, the poet evokes the enigma of arrival of an unknown character as a saviour. She beautifully puts it in these words “The brazen love/Setting free/The trapped soul/In the barren land...”

“Spring” is an ode to the poet’s life. It marks beginning of newness, hope and dissipated spirit. The underlying tone of the poem is remarkable as it is positive and lifts the veil of darkness filling heart of the poet with the spirit of resurrection out of a desiccated self. To the poet it is “Enchanted and fearless”. “Draupadi” is another brilliant poem in this collection which weaves the myths of Draupadi into a tale of social realism. The poet traces the origin of the Draupadi from the yajnic fire and makes her a symbol of the collective consciousness of fragmented psyche of suppressed womanhood in a patriarchal set up. The poem beautifully captures the ironic instance of Draupadi lost to foes in mindless game of dicing. The resurrected self burns with the flames of vengeance and blazes the world never seen in history. Tripti unravels the irony of Draupadi in these words: “A woman obsessed with vengeance,/A woman who swore revenge/Her fury changed the history!/Her fire killed many/She blazed the world,/And she burned her own!/The fire that was she,/The fire that was Draupadi!

Tripti is a poet, who enjoys philosophy, the poet has played the questions of where one comes from, and who we are, through different poems in this collection between multiple parts of the same person. It is consciousness of the poet who sees the different fragments of life with clinical details and then she lends meaning and depth to those fragments with unified

sensibility. She thinks in words and images carved out of polyphonic voices in her mind. All her poems are significant in their esoteric imagery, their mixture of mood and language, and their ironic development.

The second poet in this anthology is Neeti Banga, a fashion designer and Assistant Professor at NIFT, New Delhi. Neeti is a passionate poet, and her obsession with poetry started at an early age of seven and the journey continues. To her poetry is 'a way of connecting with the world'. Her poems in this anthology present a kaleidoscope of diverse experiences of the world imbued with sensibility and tenderness of a human heart and mind. Her poems reveal diversity of themes touched by demeanour and exuberance of a thinking mind and musical heart. "Nature's Soul" is poet's romantic adventure into nature's plenty. There is a longing for beauty, placidity and wholeness of nature. Like Wordsworth, to her woods are mystic, hills and landscapes are esoteric, far away from the din and bustle of the city, filling the mind and heart with purity of joy. "Look through My Eyes" is a beautiful poem expressing the thoughts that go on, in the mind of a visually challenged person. The whole poem reads like a journey within in a monologic form. The poem becomes a panegyric of indomitable human spirit, "I don't need your sympathy and pity/but you may empathize/I often feel low and lost./So please be there to make me realize...' The oxymoron 'bitter sweet words' reveals the ironic statements of the external world, which the protagonist negates with internalised will power "never call me weak...' Poems titled "Wild Flower", "Falling in Love", "Disappearing Balloons", "Addiction", "Crazy Little Thing Called Love!" and "Emotional Cocktail" depict different forms of love and states of emotions. "Wild Flower" explores the persona of a girl who is raw, filled with radiance of love and a natural instinct personified. The poem is replete with language of desire for the object of love whose touch she finds therapeutic and sensually arousing. "Falling in Love" is radiant with powerful emotions, evocative, sensual images, similes and metaphors upholding the

permanence in love. 'Dreamy sand Castles' that would wash away with waves have been given 'foundations to last forever'. The censorious eyes of the society have been metaphorically explicated with "Verbal quick sand and society's jaws' to underline the fragility and fear of love. 'Addiction', is a powerful poem depicting the obsession in love seen as 'unbridled desire', 'tempting distraction', 'unquenched thirst for fire' and 'a bite of original sin'. It has been presented as a longing fuelled with stubborn feelings driven by 'insane addiction'. "Crazy Little Thing Called Love!" is 'addictive-addiction', 'Demanding Attention' has been powerfully captured through dramatic imagism which develop complicated rather than simple feelings. Neeti through carefully chosen words and images lends dynamic perception and feelings to her thoughts: "Hugs of Affection/Touches of Seduction!/The fire of possession!/The calmness of belonging". 'Masks We Wear' shows the dichotomy of self between the appearance and reality, fake and real and the inherent contradictions that wrap the charred body and battered soul. There is conscientious appeal by the poet for closing the door 'because all the things, we want no more, /may try to enter, and hurt us again/revive old memories, and bring back the pain..." Most of these poems explore the complexity of man woman relationship with confrontational meaning. However, the poet doesn't raise intrinsically a gender issue but a situational one. Neeti expounds upon how this relationship helped preserve the tangible intricacies of desire and sexuality. For Neeti, the experience of poetry is more tangible than objective. She beautifully paints the world of memories in 'Emotional Cocktail'. Finally, the passion for poetry in Neeti, is intoxicating and soul searching, an abject negation of self and existence "Like a face without emotions../a tearless eye/Without my poetry...Who am I?"

The third poet, Abhijit Narayan is a corporate lawyer, a short story writer and an avid traveller. His passion for poetry and travel takes him to diverse realms of places and persons, opening the magic casements, new avenues and challenges

across the globe. To quote Abhijit “I enjoy interacting with people from different parts of the world. I feel that each individual is like a new book, with a unique story.” Abhijit like other two poets on poetic pilgrimage, in this anthology, adds richness and variety to experiences of life, transforming the subjective sensibilities into objective reality. “How can I sleep?” is a poem about how the eternal wait and love for God is keeping someone awake late at night. This poem seeks to integrate the scattered feelings of disillusionment by attempting to make a transition from human to divine love. The poem takes the readers to an interior spiritual journey which dramatises the subtle shifts in the consciousness of the speaker “I” in the poem, as he moves from his perception of the world to what he holds ideal and interesting. “A Non-Resident Indian” is a poem exploring the diasporic consciousness of the poet and his sense of belongingness to his mother country. The underlying emotion of this poem, is predominately patriotic in nature. The poet says, “You are alive within me/Like a beautiful feeling/Trobbing, pulsating/which cannot be expressed..” Another poem “A Little Girl” is dedicated to a girl who lost her father, who died fighting for India.

This poem evokes pity and a sense of sacrifice for mother country. The death of a hero has been seen in multiple ways, as a grievous loss to a daughter, mother and wife touchingly. “A Tribute to Tugee Albayrak”, is celebration of a brave girl, who was killed for harassing teenage girls. The poet pays his tributes to this brave girl “She is gone/But, her spirit, her courage/Will inspire many /Across the globe...” Here the poet creates the waves of surging emotions and reverence that followed Nirbhaya’s cruel death in India. “Why do I Like to Travel?” expresses the desire to be alone, desire to be together in a confessional mode. “My Lord!”, is a prayer, a poem of love for God. The poet realizes the futility of human passions and then strives towards a glimpse of divine. Seeking refuge in the divinity, is an attempt to escape from the mundane worries.

The sense of morbidity, alienation, frustrations and conflicting demands, which reign the life of individuals in the contemporary world, have been beautifully portrayed in “Trapped Soul”. “Change & Love” and “Wish You were Here” depict the changing moods and psychic conditions of relationship in this materialistic world. The changes as he records, are due to egoistical reasons, and gradually the voices sink into oblivion of silence. The poem depicts the fear and loneliness that haunts the poet with fall of the day. The darkness suggests the fading hopes, signifying the sinking mood of the poet. “Crossroad” depicts the splintered identity of a migrant in a foreign land, torn between two spaces of his existence ; the luring imagined material world of his existence and the real world of his birth and cultural roots. The speaker is lonely, ‘undecided’, ‘confused’. This shows the fragmented psyche of diasporic consciousness. Abhijit is awakened to the problems of the subaltern in the contemporary society. His poem titled “Housemaid” artistically registers the ill-treatments and plight of housemaids in our society. The “I” in the poem, is a housemaid, whose existence is subjected to negligence and abuse. The callous attitudes of the employer towards the maid show the indifference and coldness to the weaker sections in the society. The poem ends on a note of hope and affirms the desire for restoration of self-dignity. “Stranger” is another poem by Abhijit, depicting his sensibility towards a character of unknown identity, lost in the vast ocean of humanity. His empathetic relationship with this anonymous character shows the natural bondage between a man and a man cutting across caste, creed, time and space. “Winter” depicts the frozen relationship, annihilated self, posing a moment of exhaustion and termination. In “Indifference”, the poet laments the deep chasm between superficial mockery of social interaction and the sincerity of the muddled life of emotions. The poem is brilliant redetection of narrator’s seeming indifference, his need to dissimulate, and his alienation from his own inner life. ‘Come Back, Please’ is an attempt to mend the severed bonds which

still lurk in the memories like pictures of some haunted house. It can be understood as an attempt to relive the old memories and their disturbing forces, placed in the context of Arnold's impatience with social banalities and hypocrisy, 'Ye-yes, we know that we can jest/We know, we know that we can smile!' Undoubtedly, Abhijit's poems are marked with richness of evocative images and palpable atmosphere.

The three poets discussed above are remarkable for their ingenuities, experimentations and diversities which make this anthology unique and experimental in content, structure and diction. These diversities notwithstanding, there are marked similarities in the outlook on life and firmly held beliefs, as regards with the values of changing world and individual liberty. Nevertheless, read as a whole, this anthology debates and relates issues to a totalitarian society. There is masterly fusion of technique and contents. These poems are the experience of the timeless moments in the temporal world. In the ultimate analysis, the poems of these poets in this anthology are meticulously tailored towards multi-directional beauty that lulls the readers in to ecstasy. "*The Dewdrops a journey begins*" is aesthetically appealing in its contents, layout, colour combination and print, for which I think, the publisher deserves more compliments and accolades. The design, cast and overall production of book is simply superb which could be a source of pleasure and profit for the upcoming poets in Indian Writings in English. I recommend this book to all lovers of poetry.

Reference

All citations in this review article have been taken from *The Dewdrops ...A journey begins*, An Anthology of Poems, Authorspress, New Delhi, 2015.

Review of Pashupati Jha's Poetry Collection *Awaiting Eden Again*

by

VIVEKANANDJHA

***(Awaiting Eden Again (Collection of Poems),
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Surviving on fast and junk food and 'on chemical colours/ of fruits, flowers and vegetables', the suffering of the people from 'obese ego' is common phenomena. The poet takes up the challenges of dwarfing these maladies and 'piercing worm' that has plagued and is playing havoc with our society. In pursuit of doing so, he seeks the shelter of poetry which 'is not a luxury' for him, but it is 'the gnawing/ of guts in the taut belly/ surge of feelings like a cyclone/storming up the veins, lungs and heart'. The poetry is not only his passion but it is also a yoga and transcendental meditation which sustains him and his poetry amid all adversities. It allows him to take a step towards restoring Eden again, 'like oyster pregnant with pearls/ no stormy wave big/ enough to steal the shine'.

Though the present volume makes use of a host of metaphors, similes, symbols and other figures of speech, the use of alliteration can be attention grabbing for both general and avid readers, not counting some epigrammatic lines like 'tyranny too has a short life, like lies', 'discretion is the better part of valour' and 'Money is the lone miracle the hospitals know'. The use of alliteration draws the interest and attention of the readers and keeps them riveted between the lines. They create appropriate atmosphere, disposition and nuance to give

readers greater insight into the thematic preoccupations of his poetry. It is like an intermission in a mission and a breathing spell in an arduous adventure. Though they have not been used here, as usually used, for comic effect, they certainly amuse the reader amid grim reality of life and society. That is the reason the poet seems to use them accidentally and sometimes, intentionally. It would be relevant and significant here to take a short survey of the uses of alliteration in this volume:

'a budding blaze—to enlighten the engulfing depth of darkness', 'sockets sunk', 'sudden shower simmering with the scent', 'pregnant with pearls', 'steal the shine', 'storm with a sweet sense', 'fragments of fulfillments', 'love to some is surrender and sacrifice', 'social show to show the world', 'burning body', 'the daily drudgery drains me hollow', 'pristine passion of love', 'love of family and a few friends', 'the teaming toilers', 'World of the Wolf', 'blinding blaze', 'The Prayer of a Poet', 'deadly doses', 'sacred seas', 'herbs hunted from fifteen forests', 'potent potion', 'matchless mobility', 'to harass the honest and the harmless', 'tight togetherness', 'smelling the stories of our passionate past', 'second hand saris and shirts', 'senile face shrinks in shame to see', 'beyond the boundary/ of creeds, cultures, and countries', 'song to silence', 'dark deeds devising', 'shining serpentine curls/where doubly dense darkness/ of arrogance and apathy rules supreme', 'sturdy stones', 'imposed ideas', 'pristine purity', 'beginning of our bond'.

The lover appeals the beloved to 'let the body touch the body/ and dissolve into an undying spirit'. His poem, 'Winter Does a Lot,' has something for all ages and strata of people, but for young couple he has the special one which makes them

Tightly close forgetting
the day's fracas; nothing
is warmer than the young flesh
knotted in clasp.

These are only few samples, but there are plenty of other poems as well depicting love and romance that can be recapitulated as a paragraph. He starts addressing his beloved with 'You',

and culminates his addressing with 'You and I' promising to meet in 'Eden Again'. The evoking of beloved through 'Let Me' embodies the famous quotation of Song of Solomon, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." 'The First Page' of life brings many 'Possibilities', promising to 'Meet Again' in auspicious moments where 'Winter Does a Lot'. His love is not merely 'a social show to show the world', 'Merely Flesh-Lost' and for quenching 'Her Desire;' rather his love is testimonial of 'Love without Mask', leaving no space for 'Betrayal' and leaving no semblance of 'Cracked Mask', reiterating his promise that they are 'Made for Each Other'. The promise he took at the time of circling round the sacrificing fire, assuring her to live no more a 'Bracketed' life. The lover reminisces past 'Moments' of love which becomes even more momentous in her 'Absence'.

The poem, 'Solution' clearly reveals what the themes the poet imagines, creates and recreates. He certainly seems to be preoccupied with pathetic condition of his country, recurrent terror-attacks, burgeoning cases of molestations, eve-teasing and rapes, corruption in offices, unemployment, ecological crisis and pollution, corrupt politician and officials, etc:

Why is our country going to dogs?
Why are there frequent terror-attacks?
Why is the number of rapes going up?
Why don't the files move in offices?
Why are the youths without jobs?
Why are bridges washed off in the first flood?
Why are the cracks visible in the new houses?
Why does the pollution shoot up by the day?
Why are those, who rule the country, so deaf?

He blurts a lot
blast him to silence before it is too late.

The poet was awarded Ph.D. on the Poetry of Sylvia Plath and her influence on his poetry is bound to be natural, not contrived one. The thematic preoccupations of some of poems reveal that

the poet is deeply desperate and agonized by the commonly reported news of violence, zero-tolerance, and depravation of morality and dispossession of women's honour. He feels 'Born at a Wrong Time' as the definition of humanity has changed, 'Man was earlier a social animal; / he is now an animal alone.' They now indulge in 'entrenched sins/ piling up and up each day/ like the growing mound of the city-garbage/ or the raging flame of inferno'. The ongoing cases of molestations, eve-teasing and rapes are another cause of concern for him as 'Nothing seems safe now from the lust/ for gold and the lechery of flesh' and victim's 'wails drowned in the lewd shouts/celebrating their male virility'. In the poem, 'The Way of the World' he depicts a sense of insecurity and horror associated with women:

A virgin dragged out from her defenceless hut
and ravished then with relish
bears stoically the torture of rape
her dress as torn and soiled as her heart.

These anguish ridden feelings are translated into words and resurface into most of his poems, taking the shape and countenance of confessional poetry. The poem, 'For You Alone, My Mom', is highly and potentially charged with anguished expression. Sons and daughters are inherently and affectionately associated with their parents, but their attachment and affinity with the father and the mother is not evenly poised and naturally inclined towards the mother. This fact is expressed by the poet in the manner of brutal frankness:

My lines and words are for you alone
and not for anyone else
not even for my dad
who only impregnated my mom
and completely forgot me forming in her womb.

Women are considered only puppets made of flesh where men discharge their brazen passion and toy with their emotions and feelings. The poet has dwelt upon the themes of women and pain, sufferings and sorrows pertaining to them, with a great deal of honesty and openness. This candid expression is a

symbol of cathartic purgation, and through this forthrightness the poet breathes a sigh of relief from the hurt and anguish buried inside his heart for the suffering women. The constrained agony is reaching its pinnacle in the poem, 'Merely Flesh-Lost,' and it is pertinent here to quote most parts of the poem in support of the ongoing debate:-

When entering my body
you see nothing beyond
the tantalizing flesh;
.....
I waited
for days, months, and years
expecting a moment in our life
when you'd get a little tired of my body
and think of our soul and spirit too.
But you didn't grow
from a crow tearing at carrion.
.....
even if I spend all my life
in waiting for more, something more
and different than the mere animal
appetite. Born of flesh
you remained a piece of flesh.

But what would happen to your love
when my body begins sagging
under the burden of withering age?
Would you go then for another young flesh?

The poetry of Pashupati Jha has a diversity and multiplicity of themes like nature, feminism, corruption, immorality, and other contemporary and radical issues. His poetry can be interpreted and its web can be woven by spinning the yarn of any of its fabrics. In the light of it, there is an unmistakable stamp of Sylvia Plath's confessional writings on his poetry and leaping further a step, he ensures that the confessional tone and element in his poetry remains free from semblance of solipsistic tendencies, making his poetry comprehensive and universal in nature. Waiting seems to be over now and it's Eden Again.

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Heart as a citation) is used by “AQUILRELLE” as a cover photo for Alisa Velaj’s book “A Gospel of Light”, published in May 2015. Another photo is published alongside the poem “You, wandering in search of light” by Alisa Velaj in “IMMAGINE & POESIA”, Vol. 2 - Project (e-book), 2015

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from *Blue Thunder-An International Anthology* edited by Ami Kaye. He has been featured as the poet of the month by *Single Hound – Literary Journal* from USA during September 2011. His Hindi poems have been published in *Janpath*, *Margdarshak*, *Vagarth* and *Lau*.

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