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**Santosh Kumar Padhy**

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**Derridean Deconstruction in the Short Stories of  
Manoj Das**

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Jacques Derrida born of Jackie Élie Derrida on July 15, 1930 is an Algerian-born French philosopher best known for developing a form of semiotic analysis known as deconstruction, which he discussed in numerous texts, and developed in the context of phenomenology. His critique of Western philosophy and analyses of the nature of language, writing, and meaning were highly controversial yet immensely influential in much of the intellectual world in the late 20th century, whose theory of deconstruction gives us new insights into the meaning of language and aesthetic value and who is virtually connected to every area of humanistic scholarship and artistic activity in the latter part of the 20th century that provides a new feeling of the influence. He died at the age of 74 from pancreatic cancer on October 9, 2004. “Deconstruction”, the word, which he transforms from a rare French term to a common expression in many languages, becomes a part of the vocabulary not only of philosophers and literary theorists but also of architects, theologians, artists, political theorists, educationists, music critics, filmmakers, lawyers, and historians. Resistance to his thinking, too, is also widespread, which sometimes seems to be bitter as it is a challenged word in the academic norms and at other times used as a common sense for which the name appears more frequently in books, journals, lectures, and common-room conversations during the last thirty years than that of any other theorist and thinker. For the subject of films, cartoons, rock song, and journalism what he has contributed is some of the most formidably difficult philosophical works of his time. For literature, if he is remembered in future centuries, it is surely to be for his contributions to our understanding of language, meaning, identity, ethical decisions, and aesthetic values. This paper intends to compare and contrast the short stories of Manoj Das in terms of Derridean deconstruction in which deconstruction is neither a construction nor a destruction rather a reconstruction – a new kind of construction, which is a need and necessity of ultimatum time and literature. Two other aspects are examined in this paper that how the eastern phenomenon is found rare and unique for a decent living all over the globe that rejects the western philosophy all the time. On the other hand, to Derrida, to deconstruct is to read the unread, to think the unthought, to cover the uncovered, and to explore the unexplored which is in other words – close reading, deep thought and feeling for a better life what Manoj Das in his stories shows more relevant for the present society.

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Manoj Das, an Odia writer, also famous in English literature, an award winning and internationally recognized writer, a columnist, an editor, a philosopher, an educationist, a radical student leader and a devoted disciple of mysticism and yoga, is now living in Pondicherry and working as a Professor of English at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education. As a bilingual writer, he has nine novels, nineteen short story collections, six travelogues, two poetry collections, and several other writings on history and culture to his credit. He is such a short story writer whom once the world famous fiction writer, Graham Greene writes: "I have read the short stories of Manoj Das with great pleasure. He will certainly take a place on my shelves besides the stories of Narayan. I imagine Orissa is far from Malgudi, but there is same quality in his stories with perhaps an added mystery" (Wikipedia).

Greatly influenced by Fakir Mohan Senapati, the grand pioneer of modern Odia fiction, Vyasa and Valmiki, Manoj Das's short stories win the heart of his readers throughout the world. Among other literary productions, his *Tales Told by Mystics* (2001) makes Manoj Das an explorer of mysticism and a seeker of right path after long years of meditation at the Pondicherry Ashram. His collections of short stories are the eye openers and eye washers in this era of post modern and post independent India with rapid industrialization and material pursuits. The stories often lead the mechanized and dehumanized human mass of the world to walk on the enshrined and enlightened path of divine grace by creating green and fresh environment suited to human living. In other words, his stories also leave a message that esoteric aestheticism is transient and only the divine path is eternal. Above all, one can easily find Manoj Das a great patriot who all the time falls back on the rich culture and heritage of our country. His love for Odisha, the native landscapes, the biological atmosphere that ushers in his short stories rather categorizes his stance as a pilgrim of rare sense and sensibility. Thus, we can revere his personality as a visionary seer. In this connection, Derrida exemplifies:

For example, in an early work on the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, *La voix et le phénomène* (Speech And Phenomena, 1967), Derrida argued that the philosophical emphasis on the "living present" concealed a dependence on the idea of death: I cannot use a sign - a word or a sentence, say - without implying that it pre-exists me and will outlive me. "I am" means "I am mortal."

Having this kind of notion in his mind, Manoj Das's short stories are collected over the past four decades from different sources as much as available of tales told by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Nigamananda, Sri Vijay Krishna Goswami, Swami Ramdas, Swami Ram Tirth, Yogiji Maharaj and so on. These stories are the treasures of our national heritage for which the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi has published the stories as the significance lies there in each story and these are appreciated even by the foreign readers much as the message of each story is appended at the end. The reason behind the

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success of Manoj Das as a storyteller is the honesty and faithfulness maintained by him when he writes: “To the best of my conviction, the theme and the spirit of the stories have been faithfully projected (xii).” Here Derrida clears his views:

The demonstration that this is so largely constituted the work of deconstruction, in which writers who laid claim to purity or transparency or universality - and this would include most of the significant figures in the philosophical tradition - could be shown, by close and careful reading, to be undoing those very claims in the act of making them by their implicit recognition of the ongoing work of difference.

Side by side, Derrida’s starting point is his rejection of a common model of knowledge and language, to which understanding something requires acquaintance with its meaning, ideally a kind of acquaintance in which this meaning is directly present to consciousness. For him, this model involves “the myth of presence”, the supposition that we gain our best understanding of something when it - and it alone - is present to consciousness.

If we discuss the short stories one by one, it authenticates Manoj Das as a true seeker of truth, justice and enlightenment. Life is changing, so also his thought, perception and writing. Born in Shankhari, Balasore, Odisha; Manoj Das a staunch supporter of Marxism in his student career turns later to a seeker of realism and now an ardent quester of spiritualism. In his collections, Manoj Das has attempted to compile hundreds of short stories from the mystics on the back drop of the richest Indian mythology, (the Purans, the Veda, the Upanishad, the history and other sources) for which the writer begins his preface:

The India of yore, evidently, was an astoundingly fertile ground for the growth of several genres of fiction. Parallel to the chronological development of its mythology (the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Itihasa or the epics and the Puranas), there grew a solid ethical, moral pragmatic and purely earthly tradition of literature consisting of the *Brihatkatha* (only a part of which is available to us as the *Kathasarit-Sagar*), a compilation of lively tales of wisdom, wit and delight; the *Jataks*, the world’s first compilation of fables, apart from stories based on dramatic events and characters of a remote past, like those of Savitri and Satyavan, Dushyanta and Shakuntala, Nala and Damayanti, king Harishchandra etc. some of which were incorporated in the *Mahabharata* and came to be regarded as aspects of our mythological lore. (ix)

“Deconstruction” is the most famous of Derrida’s terms. Yet without Martin Heidegger, the German Philosopher, no Derrida is possible because of the use of “destruction” in *Being and Time*. Therefore, Derrida is indebted to both Heidegger and Rene Descartes, the French philosopher:

But we can get a general sense of what Derrida means with deconstruction by recalling Descartes’s First Meditation. There Descartes says that for a long time he has been making mistakes. The criticism of his former beliefs both mistaken and valid aims towards uncovering a “firm and permanent foundation”. The image of a foundation implies that the collection of his former beliefs resembles a building. In the First Meditation then, Descartes is in effect taking down this old building, “de-constructing” it. We have

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also seen how much Derrida is indebted to traditional transcendental philosophy which really starts here with Descartes' search for a "firm and permanent foundation". But with Derrida, we know now, the foundation is not a unified self but a divisible limit between myself and myself as another (auto-affection as hetero-affection: "origin-heterogeneous").

Deconstruction is a form of philosophical and literary analysis that questions the fundamental conceptual distinctions, or "oppositions," in Western philosophy through a close examination of the language and logic of philosophical, which involves the ultimate aim to criticize Western logic, rising from a response to structuralism and formalism. It is a philosophical movement and theory of literary criticism that questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth; asserts that words can only refer to other words; and attempts to demonstrate how statements about any text subvert their own meanings. In its major Characteristics, Deconstruction is often regarded as undermining all tendencies toward systematization. The most fundamental project of deconstruction is to display the operations of "logocentrism" in any "text". Logocentrism refers to any system of thought which is founded on the stability and authority. Deconstruction is a way of understanding how something was created, usually things like art, students of literature, literary theory, film, communications, or postmodernist thought. But, as Derrida pointed out the center is not the center, for the idea of the centered structure is just that an idea and a metaphysical one in which the metaphysics of presence can be "shaken" by the concept of a sign, understood as a "sign-of," or a displacement, a stand in for that which is absent. Another term used by Derrida is aporia, which consists of two morphemes- 'a' and 'poros' means without passage. To define an aporia, what Derrida means to say:

The writer can openly express doubt about the current topic about which they're writing. Aporia plays a big part in the work of deconstruction theorists like Jacques Derrida, who uses the term to describe a text's most doubtful or contradictory moment."

A "transcendental signified" is also a signified concept or thought which transcends any single signifier, but which is implied by all determinations of meaning. Derrida argues that the "transcendental signified" may be deconstructed by an examination of the assumptions which underlie the "metaphysics of presence."

Out of Derrida's many definitions of deconstruction, three definitions are highly significant. The *first one* is 'Positions', which is found in the 1971 interview and in the 1972 Preface to *Dissemination*. Here deconstruction consists in "two phases" (*Positions*, pp. 41–42, *Dissemination*, pp.4–6). Derrida speaks of "metaphysics" as if the Western philosophical tradition that seems to be monolithic and homogeneous. At times like Nietzsche, he also speaks of "Platonism". At this point, deconstruction is a criticism of Platonism, which is defined by the belief that existence is structured in terms of oppositions (separate substances or forms) and that the oppositions are hierarchical, with one side of the opposition being more valuable than the other. The *first phase* of deconstruction attacks this belief

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by *quashing* the Platonist hierarchies: the hierarchies between the invisible or intelligible and the visible or sensible; between essence and appearance; between the soul and body; between living memory and rotten memory; between voice and writing; between finally good and evil. In order to clarify other two phases of deconstruction, Derrida restricts the opposition between appearance and essence. Before Derrida, Nietzsche had also criticized this opposition, and it is criticized in a lot of twentieth century philosophy. In Platonism, therefore, essence is more valuable than appearance. In deconstruction, however, we reverse this, making appearance more valuable than essence that all knowledge of essence depends on the experience of what it appears before us. Then essence and appearance are not related to one another as both are separate and opposition to each other. In other words, essence can be reduced down to a variation of appearances, which involves the roles of memory and anticipation. The reduction is a reduction to what is called “immanence,” which carries the sense of “within” or “in.” Thus, essence is found *in* appearance and essence is mixed *into* appearance. The hierarchy of essence-appearance and separated essence from appearance really defines Platonism or “metaphysics”, which is the second “phase” of deconstruction. The previously inferior term must be *re-inscribed* as the “origin” or “resource” of the opposition and hierarchy itself. This re-inscription or redefinition of appearance works in every appearance or every experience, which is temporal. In the experience of the present, there is always a small difference between the moment of now-ness and the past and the future. Here the difference is not only a difference that is non-dualistic, but also it is a difference what Derrida says “undecidable.” It is a perception experiencing anticipation presently. It is clearly contaminated with memory or the present is contaminated with the past: the experienced difference is an experience of what Derrida would call the ‘trace’.

In this way, whatever themes Manoj Das takes in his stories, one thing is sure that nostalgia/memory haunts him to the very core. He has a different kind of artistic form and style from other famous short story writers such as Ruskin Bond, ‘O’ Henry, G. D. Maupassant, Anton Chekov, and R.K. Narayan. His stories usually begin with an innocence, recreate the distant horizon with own credibility through folk, mysticism and divinity. In an interview with Sachidananda Mohanty, a Professor of English at the University of Hyderabad, on 7 January 2007, Manoj Das validates his fondness for Odishan background and indigenous art form:

Our indigenous can find appreciation in pastures new around the world, similarly, Indian literature, to whatever region it might belong, must remain Indian. With the knowledge about India growing in the world, it should find wider appreciation. The best Indian literature is to be found in regional languages.

As we go on reading the stories, we can be sure of one thing that there was no dichotomy between mundane life and divine life in the Vedic era. Everyone in

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this era performed yagna early in the morning and the ghee used for the yagna in individual home was produced by cow reared in each home. Cow was not only considered as sacred but her milk and each production of milk was accepted as auspicious. Even cow-dung was used as the most holistic element. Individual life was as pious and vegetarian as cows. Cows were an asset, property, and wealth not only for people but also for kings. He was a rich man who had possessed more number of cows. There was mass honesty, simplicity, and faithfulness between human life and animal life. Sanctity and positivism prevailed everywhere in the whole universe. Then came the *Tretaya Yuga* (era) in which one-fourth of the earth was only negative or devilish in nature. The *Ramayana* reveals that Lord Rama had taken birth to crush the evil attitude of mankind then who smashed the *Rakshasa Vamsa* of Ravana and his territory to restore peace in the world. In *Dwapara* era, God in his incarnation of Lord Krishna not only conveyed the message of love but also set up dharma (nobility) by arranging the greatest *Mahabharata* war. It was believed that truth and justice were preached in the battle field of the *Mahabharata* through the message from his own mouth, the *Bhagvat Gita* that is incorporated in the life style of good and benevolent people as well. Fifty percent occupied by the inhuman and anti-socials were completely destroyed by killing them and the rest fifty were restored in continuation with the goodness. The present era and its ratio between the good and the evil elements are altered to one-fourth quite opposite to *Tretaya Yuga*. Goodness among people is almost non-existent as a result of the evil forces all around. What to do and how to exist—is now a question for the people of positive thought and attitude as there is no end of horror, terror, brutality, bloodshed, inequality, injustice, indiscipline, jealousy, intolerance and all kinds of inhuman qualities. Both nature and women are tortured, exploited, and even crashed under feet. In this situation, Manoj Das's stories are the remedial measures and the real gateway of mankind for which in his foreface he also urges: "I must hasten to add that even stories with a strong ascetic orientation were designed not so much to inspire disgust for the mundane world as to warn man against attachment to false values, greed, lust etc. and his readiness to use even occult powers for satisfaction of blind desires" (xi).

In addition to that deconstruction aims to disturb in order to discover books, poems and other writing. Deconstruction is breaking something down into smaller parts. Sometimes deconstruction looks at how an author can imply things he does not mean. By deconstructing a text, we learn to read beyond a text's straightforward content and uncover new meanings and truths. Beside critique, Derridean deconstruction consists in an attempt to re-conceive the difference that divides self-consciousness in consciousness of oneself.

Gaining much confidence from Odia writing first, which is later, extended to his writing in English, Manoj Das confirms a guaranteed success and popularity for



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him. From the richest culture, heritage, myth and mythology, Manoj Das experiences how to transcend transitoriness of life and how to lead life to peace, progress, permanence and spirituality. He is a seeker of *Swadharma* or true inner freedom, which has no conflict with the collective life. It further requires only a transformation of human consciousness in the recent trend. Both the *Mahabharata* and Homer's *Ulysses* are abundantly present in his novels and short stories. It is the human stupidity and foolishness as revealed by seers, saints and monks what Manoj Das in an attempt intends to curb the situation and further clarifies: "But satire against stupidity (the first sign of stupidity is, it never suspects itself—says a mystic), inhumanity and exhortation to broaden the consciousness assume an equally great importance in many such tales and several of them reveal subtle mysteries of the spiritual world" (xi).

What Manoj Das wants to explore, through his stories, is to simplify human living now a days and to make others go in to the depth of judgment and consciousness. He knows that all are one and grace is one. Unless one is not showered with grace, it is impossible for him to grow. The truth is that there are experiences and inspirations but without grace, nothing is fructified. Life's ultimate goal can be achieved through strong faith, confidence, labour and ceaseless effort, not by greed, vanity and pretention. Better understanding helps grow with judgment. Similarly, spiritual awakening solves all the problems of earthly life. Our natural environment is our home. We can't save ourselves unless we save it. Before an incident or accident, nature gives us ominous warning. We can, therefore, follow nature for our betterment. Thus, nature perpetuates grace upon mankind: work is worship. Karma/action (work/duty) results in joys and sorrows because it depends on action. Better action, better result; evil act, evil result. It is not easy to understand karma (action) otherwise there would be no pain, agony and suffering at all. Indian mysticism lays a great emphasis on human consciousness behind the action. We can certainly judge a man from his action. The stories, Manoj Das prefers to write, also present a truth that virtue is always rewarded and vice is definitely punished. The stories go through examining knowledge and ignorance, scholarship and innocence, faith and faithlessness, miracle and incessant labor. *Satsang* or befriending the truth and benevolent one leads man to spiritualism but there can be no attainment/salvation or purgation unless we surrender to God completely. This only gives man all kinds of happiness—both material and spiritual. Manoj Das, in certain stories, tries to show the distinction of body and soul. Body decays, not soul; the soul leaves the body after death to dissolve in the super-soul or God. On the other hand, satisfaction of the body never gives happiness unless the soul is satisfied. Realizing the truth is not knowing it. It needs specific practice for a fulfillment in life. *Mantra* or chant of holy lines brings *siddhi* or success. For each success, a teacher/Guru is highly necessary

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who can guide life in the right path. Again, success without divine grace is futile. Manoj Das's use of a number of images, symbols and allegories make the short stories pack with wit, wisdom and humour. One of the chief aspects of his stories is to fill the mental blindness or hollowness with truth, honesty, and reality.

Another aspect of the story writer has a deep significance that freedom of choice without wisdom is valueless and meaningless. Besides it is obvious that different limbs of the human body are energized by different benevolent Gods and Goddesses. Thus, this short story collection makes Manoj Das to continue a journey from earthly life to ascetic life, worldly life to spiritual life, esoteric life to divine life. Side by side, human commitment is also important. In one of the stories, the story writer narrates about *Maya*, which has two ways – *Vidya* and *avidya*, deed and misdeed, acceptance and non-acceptance, action and non-action. The parables behind the stories are rare and immensely significant. Each story illustrated in this collection emphasizes two things – inner being and outer being, inner action and outer action, inwardness and outwardness. One can seek the inner self by prayer and meditation to reach the ultimate destination of life. Acquiring knowledge cannot alone help one to cross the river of life. What is necessary for him is to have strong faith in God. There is a difference between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is more important than the theoretical one. It never allows ego and envy to live within and to ruin inside. These are the tales not told once by mystics but retold again and again. What Manoj Das verily believes too is fate or luck that is predicted earlier. One can change his fate into luck by the paths of mystic lore 'which is the study of the self that not only makes one to go on one's lighter path but also works like a true friend all the time. To know the inner self/true self and to work accordingly is the best remedial step for this world of crises. Manoj Das's best attempt to attain goal is the path of renunciation.

Indeed, the technique, Manoj Das follows, is superbly different from other contemporary short story writers of India and abroad. These are noticeable opening, interesting plot, well connected subplots, flourishing structure, appropriate action, recognizable climax, satisfying ending, eye-catching atmosphere, effective imagery in colloquial language, interior dialogue, skillful exploitation, conventions of the genre, enhanced narratives, perfect and often chosen language to make the story mesmerize in general. What conjures up mostly in his vision is his own vision rooted in his nativity, Odisha and her rarest of the rare landscapes, culture, heritage and life pattern. In addition to these all, one can expect the unexpected, gentle demonstration and neatly setting of motives, celebration of local settings, nature, environment description of plant life especially Odishan background. Bhabagrahi Maharana in writing his article, "The Locale in the short stories of Manoj Das",

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begins:

Manoj Das, the modern Vishnu Sharma of India is a wizard of words who wields his pen like the wand of a magician to take his readers to the land of his wonder and reality now in a ship in the heart of the sea of his fancy and fantasy and now in the chariot of realism to show the happenings of real world against the backdrop of fantasy. He is the only post-independent modern short story writer in India who has acclaimed international fame as a story teller par excellence. (60)

As the best classical modern Indian story teller, Manoj Das never forgets his place, people and time, nostalgic reminiscences, numerous accounts of human misery, emotional country side folks, tradition, myth, mythology, heritage culture, shrines, temples, other belongingness of the villages association of human and non-human along with the villagers, individuals as well as collective mass accumulations of fun, fable and fantasies, rustic life and unity of time, place, action. What Manoj Das has aptly done for his short stories, one can find him restoring the lost past, exploring the unexplored frontiers whose writing is aimful, insightful and full of stark reality of life. He is even capable of escaping the unescaped, mesmerizing the utopian aestheticism, transporting the readers to a new unknown wonderland who also easily inserts the incidents and subplots to his stories. Manoj Das always nestles himself amid the ever green environment of rustic life often mysterious and adventurous. He is a master of subversion who can subvert for turns into misfortunes and vice-versa. His evocation of other worlds is not only comical and amusing but also magical and rather a mysterious quality. He deals with common people with an uncommon experience of transcending both natural and supernatural elements. His high sense of judgment is rare, unique, incomparable, and more interesting than the *Arabian Nights* and *Aladdin's adventures*.

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Vibha B. Agrawal

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## Quest for Divine Love: A Transcendental Expedition of Paramhansa Yogananda

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“Surrender yourself to God and you will find that your life will  
become like a beautiful melody.”

Paramhansa Yogananda

Spirituality has been a subject of inquisitiveness since time immemorial. Who am I? Why am I born? What is the purpose of my life? What is beyond this materialistic world? are the questions that have been haunting man's psyche for ages. Yoga is a holy science which helps us resolve all these probing questions of life. It makes possible the communion with blissful Lord, who bestows on us the insight to comprehend the subtleties of life's mysteries. It is a technique to go deep into the self and enjoy transcendental happiness by merging it with the Superself. To restrain the senses from material attachment and orient them Godward is the true characteristic of a yogi. Through the practice of Yoga, one can master one's body by controlling mind and converting it, at will, into pure energy. Such a person enjoys everlasting bliss. The *Bhagwad Gita*, the priceless possession of India's spiritual endowment, propounds this fact in the following sloka:

Jitatmanāḥ prashāntasya parmātmā samāhitah

Sitosna-sukha-dukhkeshu tathā mānāpamānayoh (6.7)

[For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquility. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honour and dishonor are all the same. (Prabhupāda 279)]

Indian soil is blessed with the hallowed feet of peerless saints such as Sant Kabir, Meerabai, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mahaavtar Babaji, Ramkrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekanand, Lahiri Mahashaya, Swami Shri Yukteshwar Giri, Paramhansa Yogananda etc., who dedicated their entire life to sow the seeds of spirituality in the hearts of the canaille all over the world. They have left a rich spiritual heirloom to be followed by the coming generations.

Paramhansa Yogananda, an incarnation of divine love, an enlightened master and apostle of 'Kriya Yoga', illumined the life of millions through his universally acknowledged book *An Autobiography of a Yogi* - a book which brought spiritual revolution throughout the world. Acknowledging the book's divine nature, Newsweek reports: "Yogananda's book is rather an autobiography of the soul than of the body" (xx). He brought east and west closer through the imperishable bond of spirituality - a blissful bond which binds the soul with the Supersoul and directs

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life towards its true abode. He disseminated the ancient science of Kriya Yoga worldwide. His autobiography is a beautiful account of his journey to discover his spiritual self. The book unearths the mysteries related to the existence of all powerful soul. It introduces us to our true self, revealing the tremendous potential of our mind. It is not only a book but a sacred literature which makes one aware of the consciousness of Spirit through the practice of 'Kriya Yoga' i.e. "union (yoga) with the Infinite through a certain action or rite (kriya)" (235). Kriya Yoga is a scientific technique to recharge the blood with oxygen and transform it into life current to "rejuvenate the brain and spinal centers". Apart from *Autobiography of a Yogi*, his spiritual treasure contains his audio recordings and books penned by him such as *Man's Eternal Quest*, *The Divine Romance*, *Journey to Self-Realization*, *Whispers from Eternity*, *Where there is Light*, *Scientific Healing Affirmations*, *Metaphysical Meditations*, *Spiritual Diary*, *The Law of Success*, *How can You Talk With God*, *In the Sanctuary of Soul*, *Sayings of Paramhansa Yogananda* and *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagawad Gita – Royal Science of God Realization - The Immortal Dialogue between Soul and Spirit (A New Translation and Commentary)*. It is a two volume work with a novel interpretation of the Bhagwad Gita. Unlike other interpretations, Paramhansaji, in this offbeat work, focuses on the training of one's mind through mediation techniques.

Born in 1893 in a devout, well to-do Bengali family, Paramhansa Yogananda, right from his childhood, was aware of the true purpose of life i.e. to become one with ever blissful Lord through inner communion. He grew up in a spiritual ambience. He used to meditate with his parents before the picture of their guru Lahiri Mahashay. He narrates his early spiritual experiences in his autobiography thus:

As I grew, the thought of the master grew with me. In meditation I would often see his photographic image emerge from its small frame and, taking a living form, sit before me. When I attempted to touch the feet of his luminous body, it would change and become the picture. As childhood slipped into boyhood, I found Lahiri Mahashay transformed in my mind from a little image, cribbed in a frame, to a living enlightening presence. (7)

God intoxicated Paramhansa devoted his entire life to the service of mankind. His father wanted him to work for the Indian railway and offered him an executive position but he declined because accumulation of spiritual wealth was more important for him than amassing material possessions. His entire focus was on his spiritual upliftment since his early childhood. His love for God was so fervent that he could feel Him in his every nerve. He forsook all worldly pleasures to become one with the cosmic being. His intimacy with the 'heavenly father' was greater than that of any mundane relations. He was guided by the divine power – a drive which propelled him to spread the divine knowledge all over the world.

His parents were blessed couple endowed with saintly qualities. They were the disciples of an unparagoned master, Lahiri Mahashaya. His father, Bhagabati

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Charan Ghosh, strictly adhered to the principle of simple living and high thinking. He was a man of intellect, an outstanding mathematician and logician. He avoided all luxuries and remained contented with what God had bestowed on him. Material profit was immaterial for him. Once, when questioned by his youngest son Bishnu, on noticing the large deposit on a bank statement, he replies: “Why be elated by material profit? ... The one who pursues a goal of even-mindedness is neither jubilant with gain nor depressed by loss ... man arrives penniless in this world and departs without a single rupee” (4). His mother, a religious, kind hearted lady, was an epitome of love. She brought up all her eight children under the canopy of religion. She made them acquainted with the holy scriptures, Mahabharata and Ramayana, to inculcate moral values in them in their early lives. After losing his beloved mother at a tender age of 11, he sought shelter in the lap of Cosmic Mother, who guided the further course of his life. Her words healed his bruised soul when he was in a traumatic state after the sad demise of his most beloved mother. To quote: “It is I who have watched over thee, life after life, in the tenderness of many mothers. See in my gaze the two black eyes, the lost beautiful eyes, thou sleekest!” (13).

His earnest quest for the Divine drew him to the Himalayas. His spiritual yearning was so acute that many times he was found wandering in quest of the divine master whose face often appeared in his visions during deep meditation. Only a guru could direct his divine expedition. His search ended in 1910, when he finally succeeded in finding his revered guru swami Sri Yukteswar Giri in his visit to Banaras. Both the *guru* and the *shishya* had been desperately waiting for each other for ages. Recounting his meeting with his guru, Paramhansji writes in his autobiography:

A Christlike man in the ochre robes of a swami stood motionless at the end of the lane. Instantly and anciently familiar he seemed; for a trice my gaze fed hungrily. ... I felt heavy numbness in my feet. As though turned to stone, they were unable to carry me farther. Laboriously I turned around; my feet regained normality. I faced the opposite direction; again the curious wait oppressed me. (88)

He felt magnetized towards the saint. He quickened his pace to reach the other end of the lane where his guru stood gazing in his direction. He fell on his guru's feet saying “Gurudeva!” It was the same divine face with ‘halcyon eyes, in a leonine head with pointed beard and flowing locks’ which he had seen during meditation since his childhood days. With this meeting two long awaited souls amalgamated into one. The guru expressing his joy utters: “O my own, you have come to me!” ... “How many years I have waited for you” (89). Mukunda sought his abode at the holy feet of his guru. He knew that only his guru could lead him to God. His joy knew no bounds hearing the passionate words of his guru: “I give you my unconditional love.” ... “Will you give me the same unconditional love” (89-90)? This unconditional love developed a very strong bond between the guru and the

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shishya. Thus, Mukunda's sojourn in Banaras brought him the most desired and awaited person in his life i.e. his guru Shri Yukteshwar Giri. Expressing his joy Paramhansji writes: "A Lifelong shadow lifted from my heart; the vague search, hither and yon, was over. I had found eternal shelter in a true guru" (103). Mukunda was then initiated in 'Kriya Yoga' by his master. His beatific touch blazed Mukunda's soul. A divine light merged into his being. He experienced "ineffable bliss" which he had been seeking for long.

Divine love has its own grace and beauty. It elevates life and enlightens it with seraphic radiance. It unites the soul with the Supersoul. Differentiating it with the ordinary love Paramhansji writes: "Ordinary love is selfish, darkly rooted in desires and satisfactions. Divine love is without boundary, without change. The flux of human heart is gone forever at the transfixing touch of pure love" (90).

Mukunda spent best part of his life in his Guru's hermitage at Serampore. He called his guru jnananatar "incarnation of wisdom". His long cherished dream of becoming a 'Yogi' actualized when he was accepted by the monastic swami order of the Giri branch with the title Yogananda. This spiritual master was initiated into swamihood in "the bidwat (non-ceremonious) manner" and was given the privilege by his guru Shri Yukteshwar to choose a new name for himself. He chose the name Yogananda which meant "bliss (*ananda*) through divine union (*yoga*).". Later, in 1935, his guru bestowed on him the title of Paramhansa. Thus, having started his life's journey as Mukundlal Ghosh, Yogananda, in the divine company of his guru, entered the realm of spirituality, felt the blissful divine grace, and transformed into Paramhansa asserting the truth of his being: "I am He." His fate was decided much before his birth. He was spiritually baptized by "omniscient guru", Lahiri Mahashaya, when he was just an infant in his mother's arms. Blessing the infant, Lahiri Mahashay told his mother: "Little mother, thy son will be a yogi. As a spiritual engine, he will carry many souls to God's kingdom" (15-16).

Mukunda's intense longing for travelling to religious places, right from his childhood, was an indication of his spiritual quest. His first visit to Banaras and meeting with swami Pranabananda – "the saint with two bodies" was a breathtaking experience for him. He was stupefied to see the miracle, the saint Pranabananda performed to bring Kedar Nath Babu to his house. He materialized his other self, appeared in front of Kedar Nath Babu and moved his course towards his house. This miracle inflamed his yearning for God. Daily practice of meditation since his early days drew him up towards the Divine search. His interrupted flight towards Himalayas due to his brother Ananta could not deter his spirit to find a guru. His father and elder brother tried their best to curb his desire of becoming a yogi. They wanted him to first complete his studies but Mukunda's passion for God never diminished. His Sanskrit tutor Kebalanand, an exalted disciple of Lahiri Mahashaya, and an illumined sage intensified his cravings for God.

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Miracles performed by spiritually enlightened saints fueled his desire to unite with the Supersoul. His experience with Gandh Baba (Perfume Saint) was unusual. But he was in search of something beyond the body. He wanted to experience spiritual ecstasy. To quote:

“Perfumes fade with flowers.”

“Perfumes fade with death. Why should I desire that which pleases the body only” (44)?

One has to come out of body consciousness to realize Divine Consciousness - the super conscious state. In one of his talks delivered at Self-Realization Fellowship International Headquarters Los Angeles, California, December 16, 1934, Paramhansji asserts:

Once you have tasted the wine of spiritual ecstasy, you will find that no other experience can compare with it. ... When the profound ecstasy of God falls over you, the body becomes absolutely still, the breath ceases to flow, and the thoughts are quiet – banished, everyone by the magic command of the soul. Then you drink of God’s bliss and experience an intoxication of joy that not a thousands draughts of wine could give you. (161)

Tiger Swami was another saint who influenced Mukunda by his feats. The story of his encounter with Raja Begam, the royal Bengal, a ferocious tiger, and subsequent spiritual change in his disposition thrilled his young mind. The impressive words of Swami left an ineffaceable impression in his psyche:

Mind is the wielder of muscles. The force of a hammer blow depends on the energy applied; the power expressed by a man’s bodily instrument depends on his aggressive will and courage. The body is literally manufactured and sustained by mind. ... Outward frailty has a mental origin: in a vicious circle, the habit-bound body thwarts the mind. If the master allows himself to be commanded by a servant, the latter becomes autocratic; the mind is similarly enslaved by submitting to bodily dictation. (51)

Mukunda’s inquisitiveness brought him to Bhaduri Mahashaya, a yogi, who could remain in the air. He had renounced the worldly wealth in his early childhood ‘for a cosmic empire of endless bliss’. The saint asserts: “The shortsighted worldly folk are verily the real renunciants! They relinquish an unparalleled divine possession for a poor handful of earthly joys” (62). He laid emphasis on *anubhava i.e.* an actual perception of God. This great yogi directed Mukunda’s journey Godward.

Mukunda’s cherished dream of getting the blessings of Divine mother could be realized through an enlightened saint Master Mahashaya. The Master had an angelic appearance. He was a blissful devotee of the Divine mother and ‘was in intimate converse with the Universal Mother’. Mukunda could see the divine beauty of the universal mother by the grace of Master Mahashaya:

Haloed in splendor, the Divine mother stood before me. Her face, tenderly smiling, was beauty itself.

“Always have I loved thee! Ever shall I love thee!”

The celestial tone still ringing in the air, She disappeared. (75)



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This assurance from the cosmic mother fulfilled his long cherished desire.

Mukunda's meeting with Ram Gopal Majumdar, 'the sleepless saint', ended his ever fresh crave for the Himalaya. This sleepless saint convinced him that 'Mountains cannot be his guru.' A little room with closed door is the cave of a yogi where he can commune with God. Mukunda later realized that God is with him in the form of his guru. The unconditional love between the guru and the shishya is beautifully delineated in Paramhansji's Autobiography. Mukunda's abrupt departure to Himalaya did not enrage the master rather his angelic self utters the following words: "Wrath springs only from thwarted desires. I do not expect anything from others, so their actions cannot be in opposition to wishes of mine. I would not use you for my own ends; I am happy only in your own true happiness" (140). In true love, there is no place for vexation. Both, the lover and the loved, feel happy in each other's happiness. There are no desires, no expectations; just love, pure unconditional love with divine fervour. One gentle touch of his guru illumined his entire self. Divine elation pierced his every pore. This spiritual ecstasy finds expression in Autobiography thus:

My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage and streamed out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore. The flesh was as though dead; yet in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body but embraced the circumambient atoms. ... All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick motion pictures. My body, master's, the pillared courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated, until all melted into a luminescent sea; ... The unifying light alternated with materialization of form, the metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation. (142)

The divine touch of his guru blessed him with the experience in cosmic consciousness which he had passionately craved for.

Our success, in any field of life, lies in the power of thought. Through meditation, we receive this power directly from God. To feel God within, talking to Him all the time, and 'drinking deep of the intoxicating wine of God's presence is meditation.' In his talk delivered at First Self Realization Fellowship Temple at Encinitas California, entitled "Man's Eternal Quest", Paramhansaji asserts:

"Meditation keeps you directly in tune with the Power that evokes all thought. To touch that Supreme Power is meditation" (390).

Paramhansaji, in his Autobiography, shares his cosmic experiences during meditation. One such experience he had after completing the writing of the chapter "The Law of Miracles". As he sat in lotus posture and looked up, he noticed that "the ceiling was dotted with small mustered-coloured lights, scintillating and quivering with a radiumlike lusture. Myriads of pencilled rays, like sheets of rain, gathered into a transparent shaft and poured silently upon me" (275). His body

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transformed into astral form and felt floating left and right. The room blazed with the beacon of light. He heard a voice from within the light: “This is the cosmic motion-picture mechanism.” ... “Shedding its beam on the white screen of your bed sheets, it is producing the picture of your body. Behold, your form is nothing but light!” (276). He felt elated seeing the motion picture of his body.

At regent Hotel in Bombay he had another such overwhelming experience. As he gazed out of the window of his room, he had a glimpse of the ‘ineffable vision’ of Lord Krishna. Sharing this ecstatic experience in the chapter, “The Resurrection of Shri Yuktेशwar”, Paramhansaji states: “Lord Krishna!” The glorious form of the avatar appeared in a shimmering blaze ... The divine figure waved to me, smiling and nodding in greeting. When I could not understand the exact message of Lord Krishna, he departed with a gesture of blessing” (405). A week after this vision, he had another divine vision of his guru, Shri Yuktेशwar. His master, whom he had ‘buried beneath the cruel puri sands’ appeared before him as an illumined astral being and gave him a detailed account of the astral cosmos which is a beautiful world of light. Shri Yuktेशwar Giri, who left his body consciously in a state of *nirbikalpa Samadhi*, got a place in Hiranyaloka or ‘illumined Astral Planet’, where only illumined souls could enter.

The next vision was the form of the blessed Lord Jesus in an opal blue light which he saw in the Encinitas hermitage. The sight of Jesus with a Holy Grail enthralled him:

A young man, he seemed, of about twenty-five, with a sparse beard and moustache; his long black hair, parted in the middle, was haloed by a shimmering gold. ... In his glorious gaze I felt the power that upholds the myriad worlds. A Holy Grail appeared at his mouth; it came down to my lips and returned to Jesus. (477)

Such experiences prove that he was not an ordinary soul. By continuous practice of meditation, his soul had attained the Super-conscious state – the higher Self. This divine soul ultimately took shelter in a divine abode on March 7, 1952. Like his life, his death was also exceptional. Even after twenty days of his death, his body was in a “phenomenal state of immutability...” (478). No signs of decay could be observed in it. Such a bizarre life this great yogi led!

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**Spiritual Nationalism of Sri Aurobindo and  
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**I**

Nationalism is not to be confused with patriotism. Patriotism is a “pride and feeling of love, devotion and sense of attachment to a homeland, and a sense of alliance with other citizens who share the same sentiment. This attachment can be a combination of many different feelings relating to one’s own homeland, including ethnic, cultural, political or historical aspects” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriotism>, accessed on January 21, 2019).

Nationalism, according to Smith (9), is a political, social, and economic ideology and movement characterized by the promotion of the interests of a particular nation, especially with the aim of gaining and maintaining the nation’s sovereignty (self-governance) over its homeland. According to him, Nationalism holds that each nation should govern itself, free from outside interference (self-determination). It further aims to build and maintain a single national identity—based on shared social characteristics such as culture, language, religion, politics, and belief in a shared singular history and to promote national unity or solidarity (25-26). Nationalism seeks to preserve and foster a nation’s traditional culture, and cultural revivals have been associated with nationalist movements (37).

However, for Anderson (211), nations are merely “imagined communities” as members of these communities will rarely know each other, and thus they will draw upon the concept of nationality from their own imagined population to which they belong to. This idea emerged from earlier concepts elaborated by Gellner (1965), who argued that nationalism is nothing more than the process of imagining nations. A similar definition that focuses on the idea that nationalism is internally felt by the individual was developed by Khon (9) arguing that “Nationalism is a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state”.

Thus, we understand that for Smith nationalism is a concept that describes self-governing capacity, while for Andersen and Gellner it is a process of imagining communities. Similar to Smith, Khon sees nationalism as connected with the notion of state. Finally, the notions of self-determination and nationalism as imagined forms of identity have been maintained from the 19th century (Khon, 1965; Gellner, 1969) to the 21st (Smith, 2013).

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Nationalism as a concept and an ideology did not become recognized until 18<sup>th</sup> century. By and large the word “nationalism” came to be used in the present sense only after the Napoleonic wars though throughout history, people had their kin group and traditions, territorial authorities and homeland. According to Smith (26-30), there are three paradigms for understanding the origins and basis of nationalism. They are *Primordialism (perennialism)* which proposes that there have always been nations and that nationalism is a natural phenomenon. *Ethnosymbolism* explains nationalism as a dynamic, evolutionary phenomenon and stresses the importance of symbols, myths and traditions in the development of nations and nationalism. *Modernism* proposes that nationalism is a recent social phenomenon that needs the socio-economic structures of modern society to exist.

## II

### Four Theories of Nationalism

According to Llobera (1999), four main theories dominate the notion of nationalism. These are primordial, socio-biological, instrumentalist, modernisation and evolutionary theories.

*Primordialism* assumes that there exist in all societies certain primordial, irrational attachments based on blood, race, language, religion, region, etc. They are, in the words of Clifford Geertz (1973), the result of a long process of crystallization. Sociobiologists take this perspective a step further and assert the biological character of ethnicity. Primordialist approaches contend that ethnic bonds are ‘natural’, fixed by the basic experiences that human beings undergo within their families and other primary groups. The primordialist position was further elaborated by C. Geertz (1973). Three major ideas follow from his work: 1) Primordial identities are natural or given. 2) Primordial identities are ineffable, that is, cannot be explained, or analysed by referring to social interaction, but are coercive. 3) Primordial identities deal essentially with sentiments or affections. Herde, Fichte, Smith, and Connor see nationalism as something which was always present in people but had been reawakened under political self-consciousness (Brown, 2003). Geertz (1973) argues for the concept of given identity, as an individual who is born within a group will receive its identity.

Consequently, ethnic boundaries are established which are represented by the individual’s shared experience with family members and the group (Tishkov, 1997). Socio-biologists’ claims derived from this theory argue that heritage and implicitly ethnicity is passed on genetically (Llobera, 1999). These theories frame the notions of ethnic nationalism and cultural nationalism. Ozkirimli (2017) argues that these two forms of nationalism have their roots in primordial theory.

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Hutchinson and Smith (1994) have analysed primordialism in depth and argue that human social interaction will take place based on three elements: kin selection, reciprocity, and coercion. From this notion, the authors hypothesise that ethnic groups are in fact super-families. Therefore, members of these super-families will be biologically inclined towards cooperation and reciprocity with their own kin while also resorting to some forms of coercion (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994). Conclusively, it can be argued that notions of belonging and indirectly excluding others, encountered in definitions of nationalism derive from these theories.

Instrumentalist theories diverge from primordial theories by arguing that ethnic groups can be seen as nations and their boundaries are not fixed, but, in fact, these can vary according to specific needs (i.e. economic development) (Llobera, 1999). A representative figure in this domain is Barth (1969), who supported this theory by arguing that ethnicity is not a reference to biological or cultural heritage but more a form of social organisation. In Barth's (1969) assertion, boundaries serve a specific purpose, biological, ecological, economic, political and/or historical. Transposed, this idea can be encountered in the notion of religious nationalism (Sandler, 2004), where Islamic cultures maintain boundaries for political interest but individuals become a part of their nation when converting to Islam.

Modernisation theories strongly oppose primordialism by arguing that nationalism emerged as the result of modern processes, such as industrialisation, favourable political, cultural and socio-economic conditions (Llobera, 1999). Hence, theoreticians, who support this claim such as Kohn, Kedourie and Gellne, see nationalism as a modern invention (Hall, 1998). According to Hall (1998), this idea can be seen in notions of civic nationalism and ideological nationalism. Although these three theories show substantial contrasts, the fourth theory of nationalism, namely the Evolutionary theory, attempts to bring together the notion of modern and primordial (to some extent).

As a result, evolutionary theories argue that indeed, nationalism is a product of modern times; however, in Europe, this concept evolved from the ideas of Andersen (2006) and Gellner (1969) of imagined communities corroborated by a form of patriotic nationalism which was present since the medieval period (Llobera, 1999). However, as Smith (1981) observed, in order to pinpoint the emergence of nationalism, an analysis of the transference from medieval to modern needs to be conducted. In order to accomplish this, all societal elements must be considered, including economic, social, political and ideological (Smith, 1981).

By assessing the aforementioned theories of nationalism, several elements can be noted. Firstly, the evolutionary theories focus on the emergence of nationalism in Europe, which thus implies that this theory cannot be applied for explaining how nationalism emerged elsewhere (i.e. Hutchinson (1987) on the emergence of

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nationalism in Hindu nations. However, evolutionary theories can be used to explain the formation of definitions that rely on state and nation. Secondly, primordial, instrumentalist, and modern theories of nationalism can be used as frameworks to explain the differences between forms of nationalism and subsequently between definitions of this phenomenon. Another observation that can be made in this case is that nationalism cannot be understood as functioning from a pure ideological, ethnic, dogmatic, or religious form.

### **III**

#### **Forms of Nationalism**

Nationalism can be state ideology or a non-state popular movement. These two manifestations have given rise to five forms of nationalism (ethnic, religious, civic, cultural or ideological). Synder (xiii, 107) examines over 10 sub-types of nationalism some of which seek unity and self-governance for people of certain ethnic groups while others seek expansion and economic growth for nations against the global community. While other forms of nationalism, i.e. left-wing nationalism, seek to bring social unity and equality regardless of ethnicity.

#### **Ethnic Nationalism**

In ethnic nationalism a nation is defined by its ethnic connection which encompasses shared language, culture, heritage, and ancestry. Because of this characteristic, Roshwald (215) describes this form of nationalism as intolerant and descriptive of authoritarian regimes. This demonstrates that ethnic nationalism leads to conflict, especially in ethnic diverse locations.

#### **Religious Nationalism**

Religious nationalism denotes a form of nationalism which relies upon a central religion or dogma that has implications in politics and state affairs (Omer and Springs, 80). In contrast to the prevailing modern forms of nationalism, it has been described as an irrational form of nationalism. In several Islamic states, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan, the religious law (Sharia Law or the Islamic Law) is the ultimate law of the state. As ethnic nationalism, it shows little tolerance for other religious beliefs. It does not focus on ethnic unity, but rather on religious unity by repelling any opposing views.

#### **Civic Nationalism**

Also referred to as 'progressive nationalism' it advocates for social unity, individual rights, and freedoms. This form of nationalism is centred on the idea of a non-xenophobic society, which shows tolerance for all its individuals and strives to

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provide equality and social justice. Civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism have a converging point, namely the element of shared culture.

### **Ideological Nationalism**

Smith in his book, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (2010, 2013) argues ideological nationalism as a form of political nationalism which argues for the capacity of nations to self-govern. This notion is also explained by Omar Dahbour (1995, 2003). Looking at the history of nationalism two main conclusions may be drawn. The first is connected with the concept of national identity and claims for self-governance. Thus, it is argued that early forms of nationalism were ideological in nature and focused on notions of territory, population, and self-government. This seems to justify Coakley's (2012) ideas, according to which definitions of nationalism overlap definitions of state, nations, and ethnicity. Secondly, because nationalism comes in various forms and subsequent types, a unified definition of nationalism is most likely unachievable. As a result, each form defines a different concept.

## **IV**

### **Sri Aurobindo's Concept of Nationalism**

During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries the world had witnessed the formation of nations in different parts of the world. The process had continued until the twentieth century. The nation and the nationalism became the dominant emotion of man. Indian nationalism had developed within the Indian society during the British rule.

Many nationalists had provided massive motive powers for the rise and development of Indian nationalism. Among them, Sri Aurobindo was an outstanding leader due to his enormous role that he had played. Sri Aurobindo's concept of nationalism goes beyond the western concept, theories and forms. It is rooted in Indian ethos and milieu. His nationalism may be termed as neo-nationalism as it was based on Indian spiritual culture. Sri Aurobindo's nationalism was influenced by the religious mysticism of *Sanathana Dharma* of India. It was a concept of revivalism based on Vedantism. Unlike the western concept of nationalism, he treated nationalism as a religion and a spiritual '*Sadhana*'. While addressing a public meeting in Bombay in 1908, he said (6): "Nationalism is not a mere political programme, nationalism is a religion that has come from God. Nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live." Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *mantra* "Bande Mataram" provides the key for understanding Sri Aurobindo's concept of the nation. "For him India was no mere geographical entity, no mere physical and material land mass, no mere intellectual concept, but a Goddess incarnate, a mighty Mother who for centuries has cradled and nourished her children and who, at that time, was groaning under

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the yoke of the foreign oppressor - her pride shattered, her glory ground to the dust (Singh 73).” His patriotic speeches and writings were filled with the spirit of religion. In his essay entitled “Bhawani Mandir”, he wrote, “For what is a nation? What is our mother country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech for a fiction of mind. It is a mighty ‘Shakti’, composed of all the ‘shakties’ of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Gods ascribed in one mass of force and welded into unity. The *shakti* we call in India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the *shakties* of three hundred million people.” (August, 1956 No.15)

His intense patriotism and religious devotion to Mother India is reflected in his speech addressed to the students of the Bengal National College. He said “there are times in nation’s history when Providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our Motherland where nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end (*Speeches* 4).” His love for India was unquestionable and impeccable. In his own words,

Love has a place in politics, but is the love of one’s country, for one’s countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine ‘*ananda*’ of self-immolation for one’s fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one’s blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. (83-4)

Sri Aurobindo considered nationalism as something different from patriotism; it is much deeper than the latter. He says, “In consonance with his concept of the nation as a divine entity, he looked upon nationalism as a spiritual essential for the emancipation of the motherland as well as the spiritual development of the devotee (Singh 73). Service to the nation was the highest and the greatest religion for him. He called it as a *yajna* in the true Vedic tradition. He wrote:

The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *Yajna* of which Boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great or small are only major or minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the motherland the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *Yajna* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest; for the motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver. (*The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, 77-78).”

When the whole Motherland was in pain under the misrule of the British, he exhorted everyone to sacrifice for her sake, and he said in unmistakable words that “there is no question of bartering or bargaining with the Mother’s liberty” (*Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, 78).

For him only ‘*Purna Swaraj*’ (absolute freedom) should be the goal of the freedom-fighters. Nothing less than this was acceptable for him. His idea of nationalism had never degenerated into mere chauvinism or narrow revivalism. He



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strongly believed that only India which was freed could alone provide spiritual guidance to the entire humanity and work for spiritual regeneration in the world. The partition of Bengal was a blessing in disguise, Sri Aurobindo said. It provided a great fillip for the people to plunge deeply into the movement. He called the movement that had generated thereafter in Bengal was a religion. Such a movement according to him had no self-interest. "It is a religion," he wrote, "which we are trying to live. It is a religion by which we are trying to realize God in the nation, in our fellow-countrymen" (*Speeches* 18-19). It was a divine *Adesha*: "it is no human think, it is God who is working in Bengal" (*Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, 78). In *Bande Mataram*, he wrote:

The political strife has assumed a religious character, and the question now before the people is whether India - the India of the holy Rishis, the India that gave birth to a Rama, a Krishna and a Buddha the India of Sivaji and Guru Gobinda - is destined for ever to lie prostrate at the proud feet of a conqueror. Are we going to sacrifice our national destiny to the whims and interests of the foreigner or are we again to take ourselves seriously and struggle for the right to live that we may fulfil in this world our Heaven - appointed mission? (December 1, 1907)

Aurobindo criticized the idealizing of the British culture by the liberal and moderate leaders such as Ranade, Surendranath Banarjee, Motilal Das, and others from 1885 to 1905. He asserted that this would only suppress their national pride and self-confidence. Unless and until a large section of the population was really infused with religious fervour and spirituality, Sri Aurobindo believed that there was no future. He felt that it was imperative for political awakening in India for the simple reason that Mother India had been demoralised for centuries under the foreign rule. He did not like the policies adopted by the Indian National Congress. He thought that the leaders of his times were toeing the line of the British for paltry benefits. They had little concern and knowledge about the past of the land. He attacked them by writing direct, incisive, and eloquent articles under the title, "New Lamps for Old" for *Indu Prakash* edited by his friend at Cambridge, K. G. Deshpande.

This process of nationalism had started much earlier as the British had consolidated its position and reached its culmination in the Renaissance movement in India. This Renaissance according to him was not merely intellectual in the western sense but in the sense of reviving the spiritual culture which is the essence of Indian culture. In his long essay, *The Renaissance in India* comprising four sections, he writes, "Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it" (6). He looked at the whole movement from a different perspective; say from his own perspective. The shaping of his concept of nationalism could be seen in this backdrop. For him, as he firmly believed, India from the beginning had never "perfectly lived in the sole power of its externalities (6)". On the other hand, India had always seen "in right relation to the supraphysical (6)"; "the mystical gods beyond man, God beyond the gods, and beyond God His

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own ineffable eternity”; “ranges of life beyond our life, ranges of mind beyond our present mind and above these... the splendours of the spirit” (7). Hence, for Sri Aurobindo, for long ages, this insight and practice was ingrained “in her spirituality, her powerful psychic tendency, her great yearning to grapple with the infinite and possess it, her incredible religious sense, her idealism, her Yoga, the constant turn of her art and her philosophy” (7). Thus, Sri Aurobindo developed his concept of nationalism based on the awareness of this past.

Historians like Romila Thapar (13) and Amalesh Tripathy (73) mentioned that Sri Aurobindo, being influenced by Bankim and Swami Vivekananda, was attempting the regeneration of India on the basis of reviving the ancient glory of Hinduism. Sri Aurobindo’s nationalism certainly has a spiritual overtone but to him spirituality is never similar to religion. Spirituality stood for him as true religion which has somewhat superior position than that of religion (177-8). For him, nationalism stood for *Santana Dharma*. It was not a creed. Similarly, Peter Heehs (101), one of Sri Aurobindo’s biographers, names it as religious nationalism. Heehs formulated this word based on his conviction that Sri Aurobindo’s nationalism was founded on the fundamental tenets of Hindu religion. This was far from truth. A careful readings of Sri Aurobindo’s writings show that he has consistently emphasised the spiritual element in one’s life as this alone would exalt man’s position in the creation. He used nationalism only in the sense of *dharma*. This *dharma* is not religion, but it is universal, quite ancient, *Sanatana Dharma*.

Sri Aurobindo, by making his concept of nationalism as spiritual, had never said anything against the west which symbolised intellectual knowledge. On the other, he admitted intellectual knowledge. He praised the west for their acumen. He writes, towards the end, in the fourth section of his essay, *The Renaissance in India*, “the rejection of *everything new* (emphasis is mine, that comes from the west in the form of knowledge) that comes to us in the stream of Time... would be intellectually absurd, physically impossible and above all, unspiritual” (51). For him, true spirituality means simply “to keep our centre, our essential way of being, our inborn nature and assimilate to it all we receive, and evolve out of it all we do and create” (51).

## V

### **M.K. Gandhi’s Concept of Nationalism**

Gandhi’s concept of nationalism and his political ideology were shaped by following Vallabacharya’s Vaishnavism, and readings of Tulasidas’s *Ramcharitamanas*, the *Gita* and the *Sermon on the Mount* and, above all, his strict adherence to the non-violence (*ahimsa*) and simple life (*tapas*) that gave him the moral basis to challenge the British rule in India. “His approach to politics”, writes Anthony J. Parel, “was as

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much jurisprudential as ethical” (xxxiii). In South Africa, he experimented successfully with Satyagraha and cooperative living based on moral and spiritual principles. However, it was only when he landed in India in 1914, he took a complete ethical direction. The urge for assimilation and insistence on anti-modernism gave the Gandhian nationalism its uniqueness. Gandhi’s politics had begun to be associated with religion in India, before its formal beginning - a phenomenon, which had not happened in South Africa. To a great extent, Gandhi himself was responsible for this image: his dress, his vegetarianism, his religious-moral discourses along with observation of various rites (like fasting on sacred days) and organization of daily-prayers had brought him such an image.

His nationalism was marked by his dualistic thinking of the need of “spiritualizing the political life” while remaining in politics. He declared, “The politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics, it is because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries” (Kher 15). Yet, his nationalism was ‘not exclusive’ (Kher 23) and that it was “intense internationalism”. For him, “Loyalty to the country is always subordinate to loyalty to God” (Kher 21). It is, therefore, clear that no fixed theory would suffice to explain his concept of nationalism.

He was a saint politician and not a politician in mundane sense. R.C. Majumdar, well-known historian of the ‘nationalist school’, opined, “Gandhi combined in himself the dual role of a saint and an active politician” (118). Buddhadeva Bhattaeharyya, Gandhi-scholar, also put forward a theory of two Gandhis – “the idealist philosopher and the practical politician - who, paradoxically enough, represented a singularly unified character” (480). His nationalism was not narrow and jingoistic, on the other, catholic and universal. In *Young India*, he writes, “my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole country may die so that the human races may live.... Let that be our nationalism” (314).

Gandhi’s nationalism was based on the principle of *satyagraha*, the distinctive feature of India founded on anti-modern values. That is why, Gandhi referred to the defending nation (he had a picture of future India in mind) as the *satyagrah* country. Thus, his nationalism was not a simple nationalism, it was a *Satyagrahi* nationalism (Bose 119-20). He once told the wife of his British surge on Mrs. Maddockin 1924:

My own motive is to put forth all my energy in an attempt to save Indian, that is, ancient culture, from impending destruction by modern, that is, Western culture being imposed upon India. The essence of ancient culture is based upon the practice of the utmost non-violence. Its motto is the good of all including every living thing, whereas Western culture is frankly based upon violence. (*Collected Works of MK Gandhi*, Vol. 23, 243)

His concept of Ramraj is not dogmatic and narrow. It is nothing to do with Hindu religion, though it carried the name of a mythological hero, Rama. He himself

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had clarified that by “*Ramraj* I do not mean Hindu *Raj*. I mean by *Ramraj* Divine *Raj*, The Kingdom of God” (*Young India*, Sept.19, 1929). This divine *Raj*, however, is rooted in Indian ethos.

To understand Gandhian nationalism, it is important to understand his critique of modern western civilisation. Gandhi wanted Indian nationalism to be about rejecting the British and western model of modern civilisation and a return to the basics of what he saw as India’s ancient genius. He had firm faith in India’s rich and unparalleled spiritual lore and wisdom. He was deeply aware that most people arguing for freedom were not appreciative quite so much of the glory of that civilisation and merely wanted a change of political rulers. This kind of change, he viewed, as peripheral and shallow. India is unlike other countries. Its civilisation and culture is ancient and incomparable. He once commented: “[You] want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger’s nature, not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but *Englistan*. That is not the *Swaraj* I want” (*Hind Swaraj* 15). So, his nationalism is nationalism minus English model of civilization. He viewed that even after political independence India should try to preserve and manifest its spiritual genius. Its spiritual genius is inseparable from its land and people. Then alone India would have a meaning of its existence.

Jayantenuja Bandhopadhyaya, in his book, *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi* (1969), identifies six ideals of Indian nationalism: (1) anti-imperialism (2) anti-racism (3) Asianism (4) internationalism (5) non-violence and (6) democracy. These ideals, according to him, found their fullest expression in Gandhi’s philosophy of nationalism. It is the strength of these ideals, Bandhopadhyaya says, that prevented the international communist movement from making any significant headway in India between the Russian Revolution of 1917 and Independence of India in 1947. The two most important ideological points of Indian nationalism are anti-imperialism and democracy and for most, non-violence a tactic rather than a policy. Anti-imperialism remains the fundamental aim of Indian nationalism.

Counter to this form of nationalism which enunciates the principles as stated above, Gandhi also did not accede to nationalism that promoted bourgeois tendencies. In his book, *Studies in Gandhism* (1962), Nirmal Kumar Bose argues that Gandhi defended himself from being classified as the prophet of bourgeois nationalism in India on two grounds: *First*, the means that Gandhi employed were such that they would lead successfully to the end only if the masses became self-acting towards the latter part of the revolution. *Second*, Gandhi did not want India to benefit at the expense of any other nation. He considered humanity as one family. Therefore, according to Bose, Gandhi transcended bourgeois nationalism. Gandhi, like Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, stresses that political independence by itself is incomplete unless accompanied by a moral or spiritual transformation of the

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individual in society. Not only does Gandhi insist on moral progress but also in the elimination of slave mentality. Equally important is the social reform, with the help of constructive programme, to realising the three pillars of *swaraj* and, thus, establishes close link between freedom and social harmony.

For Gandhi nationalism and internationalism are not essentially opposed to each other. He, however, introduces the idea of *swadeshi*. The word *swadeshi* literally means 'belonging to one's own country.' For him, it has acquired a new significance. It is not narrow parochial doctrine; on the other, it is based on the catholicity of work and service. It does not impose any prejudice against foreign things. At the same time, it does not discourage that which belongs to the home. It is not an end in itself. It is a means to nationalism and internationalism. The whole concept of *swadeshi* is neither against internationalism nor does it create any obstacle in the way of love for mankind, in general. Gandhi believes that a man can serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time. This, however, would not hamper his love for the home nation. He says, "My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature" (Sharma 116). From this, we understand that nationalism itself is neither an evil nor against internationalism; it becomes an evil, Gandhi affirms, when it is based on narrowness and selfishness. Internationalism is an extension of nationalism, which is nothing but the extension of man's self-sacrifice and love. "The individual," Gandhi addresses, "being free, sacrifices himself for the family, the latter for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, the province for the nation, the nation for all" (Datta 160).

### **VI**

Thus, we have two major political thinkers, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi, in the Freedom movement of India who have expounded the doctrine of nationalism in their own way, which is antithetical to the western doctrines and theories. Both talked and advocated nationalism which has gained the distinct label 'Spiritual Nationalism'. Both, their concepts of nationalism, are rooted in Indian spiritual tradition. However, Sri Aurobindo's concept of nationalism is much more deeply rooted in Vedic tradition than that of Gandhi's. Sri Aurobindo was a mystic poet and a yogi. His idea of nationalism had taken 'U' turn only after he came to Pondicherry to settle down and devote the rest of his life time for *yoga sadhana*. In the beginning, Sri Aurobindo was advocating revolution to achieve political independence. Gandhi was, however, not a pure mystic like Sri Aurobindo, although his way of life was religious/spiritual in nature. Only in 1893, when he went to South Africa, did he entirely devote to religious striving and, therefore, his reading became wholly religious (*Young India*, 4 Sept. 1924). His concept of nationalism has taken shape in this backdrop.

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**Magnanimity of an Indian Saint: The Portrait of an  
Apostle of God: A Focus on Basavaraj Naikar's  
Religious Play, *The Golden Servant of God***

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India is universally recognized, in the global sphere, as a nation of glorious cultural heritage based on its spirituality. Her reputation, as a spiritually advanced country, is attributable to phenomenal contributions rendered by numerous saints, sages, seers, monks, mendicants and prophets. These religious personalities have enriched this nation morally, spiritually and culturally and imparted a distinct identity to it. All these figures illuminated the moral and spiritual paths as torch bearers and beckoned to the bewildered humanity to traverse along those pre-trodden paths so as to idealize their lives and spiritualize their sentiment and sensibility.

In the galaxy of these luminaries, one, who shines luminously as a saint, is Kanakadasa, as ardent devotee of God, of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was consistently and perpetually pursuing for realization of God. His entire life centres round his philanthropic services and his dedication to contemplation and chanting of God. He is gifted with strikingly noblest qualities by virtue of which he ascends to a great height of celebrity.

If we focus on his personality, his virtues and noblest deeds are surfaced in his activities. He is considerably liberal, broadminded, generous, munificent, and a compassionate forgiver. In view of his exemplary conduct and character, he is reckoned as a symbol of magnanimity. Many incidents of his life, depicted in different scenes of the play, *The Golden Servant of God*, authenticate his magnanimity. These incidents, presented in various episodes, are illustrated below.

The first incident that reflects on his magnanimity is his munificent dispersal of gold ornaments and coins among the poor. One day, when Kanakadasa was digging the earth, he discovered and got a potful of gold ornaments and coins. He gave away this treasure munificently to the poor and utilized without avarice a part of it for the renewal of the temples. Such unprecedented noble services rendered by Kanakadasa were lavishly lauded by the inhabitants of the village Kaginelli. They admired his generosity and selflessness for the productive utilization of the treasure. In the conversation between the villager 1 and villager 2 in the Act-II, Sc-I, the latter comments: "He is a very generous man. Any one in his place would have used it for selfish purpose but this youngman has been spending that gold on poor people and on renovating the temples in the village" (15). Thus, it is axiomatic that such generous distribution of wealth among the poor is certainly a deed of magnanimity which is rarely noticed in human society.

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## **Magnanimity of an Indian Saint: The Portrait of an Apostle God:**

Another incident, that evinces Kanaka's noble mindedness, is his noblest tendency towards forgiveness. Once this social activist was assailed and assaulted violently by Mallanayaka, a deadliest enemy of his father and was grievously wounded. It took him two months to recover but he did not nurse grudge and anger against the miscreants. He did not contemplate vindictive retaliation against his enemy. Any other man in his position would have revengefully counter attacked the assailants.

When Lakkamma, the daughter of the assailant, met Kanakadasa and divulged her remorse and grief of frustration in cherishing futile aspiration for her marriage with him, he consoled her soothingly and compassionately to alleviate her mental agony that resulted from her disappointment. Any other man would have avenged her for the attack upon him by her father but Kanaka is so phlegmatic and insouciant that he did not mind the past incident of vandalism.

As a benevolent man, Kanaka enthusiastically embarked upon some constructive enterprises for public welfare without any evil motive. He constructed a barrage across a river and a canal for providing irrigational facilities to the inhabitants. Besides, he was impelled by his intensity of devotion to God to initiate a car festival and a fair for Sangameswara and another fair for Lord Narsimha at Kaginelli. Over and above, he built a rest house for homeless and helpless villagers. As we notice, Kanakadasa devotes himself actively and selflessly to execute some beneficial works with the objective of ameliorating the rural life of the inhabitants. He accomplishes all his predetermined tasks with philanthropic enthusiasm. Furthermore, he employed guards to patrol the village at night with a view to eliminating robbery in the area. It is creditable that he himself solicitously comes out at night for patrolling in order to ensure safety to the villagers. Apart from these personal services, he undertakes repair and reconstruction of reservoirs in the interest of the villagers. He provides scopes for the livelihood of farmers. In this context, the remark made by villagers is worth mentioning: "On the whole the people in his regime enjoyed peace and happiness" (21).

Another instance of his noble intention can be cited of his inclination towards celibacy. When Kanaka lost his wife, his mother proposed to him a second marriage but he declined and turned down her proposal. Such is the noble attitude of Kanaka, who overcomes the temptation of conjugal enjoyment and decides to lead a celibate life. Any man in his situation would have readily consented for remarriage in order to re-enliven his marital life but Kanaka resists this pressure in consideration of transitoriness of life. Such a consideration testifies to the nobleness of the character.

Kanakadasa has exemplified his magnanimity in obliterating another incident of attack upon him by some miscreants. While Kanaka was sauntering in the village by way of patrolling for its safety, some ruffians belaboured him fatally and left him

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wounded. As it came to the notice of the villagers, they nursed him and brought him round in two months. In this case of assault, he compromised with the situation impassively and did not betray any reaction and provocation.

We can relevantly cite another instance of his greatness certified by his old friend Vadiraja Tirtha. When Kanaka met his old classmate at Chennakeshava temple at Beluru the latter complemented him: “My dear Kanaka I am deeply impressed by your poetic talent and mystical height which is very rare in the human being” (II, ii, 55).

One day Chennappa, the chairman of the temple of Lord Venkateswara, was bidden by God in a dream to receive Kanaka with due honour. Kanaka was sleeping in the temple of God at Tirupati but Chennappa and his assistants searched for him around the temple but failed to trace out him. Finally, they found him in the temple corridor and begged him pardon guiltily. On hearing their confession of guilt Kanaka said to them liberally: “It is all right dear brother, mistakes happen quite unintentionally. Don’t worry about them” (III, ii, 49). He spoke these words compromisingly with a sense of magnanimity.

On one occasion when Kanaka sought the permission of a Brahmin to enter the Sosale Monastery of Vyasraya Swami at Tiruma-Kudalu, he was ridiculously denied entrance on the ground of his low caste. The Brahmin haughtily said to him: “Our Monastery does not allow non-Brahmin into its precincts. It is strictly meant for pure Brahmins like us” (III, I, 29). Kanaka was rudely ill-treated by the Brahmin. At this juncture, there came Vyasraya Swami, the spiritual guru of the Monastery and welcomed him cordially. As he had heard the rude voices and misbehaviour of his disciples, he asked Kanaka sympathetically not to feel hurt by the insolent behaviour of the Brahmins. On hearing his consolatory advice, he respectfully told him with a liberal mind: “Holy Sir, I am not hurt at all by the behaviour of the people here” (III, I, 30). This reply signifies his tolerance and insouciance.

Next day when Kanaka attends the class taken by Swami, he sits in the corner of the room segregated from all other disciples lest he should outrage them for his low birth. His guru taunted all other disciples for discriminating against him contemptuously on the ground of caste. Swami Vyasraya admires Kanaka being impressed by his magnanimity and says: “Oh my dear Kanakadasa you are really a golden and godly man. Our orthodox disciple will understand your greatness at the appropriate time” (III, i, 33). He further overestimated his personality in the following words “Dasa Supreme you are really a great soul. We deem ourselves lucky to have had you amidst us in the sacred complex” ... “you are a spiritual expert” (III, ii, 39).

On another occasion, Kanaka was subjected to much emotional and psychological torture in the temple of Lord Krishna at Udupi. As he stepped towards the sanctum of the temple, he was rudely debarred from entering and ill-treated.

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Brahmin-1 rebuffs him: “How can you dare enter the temple” (IV, i, 60). Then Brahmin-2 also misbehaved with him and said to him haughtily: “Beggary people are not allowed into the temple. Do not defile the holy atmosphere here” (IV, i, 60). As Kanaka further asked them for food out of hunger, they denied him inhumanly. A Brahmin growled at him: “Fellow we have no food for the dirty people like you” (IV, i, 60). However, Kanaka did not feel affronted by their misbehaviour and denial of food. This incident authenticates his magnanimity.

The Act-IV, Sc-II depicts another incident of insult inflicted on Kanaka in the same temple of Lord Krishna at Udupi. As he was staying in the porch of the temple, there came a Brahmin, who snubbed him: “You old fellow who permitted you to stay in the porch? You better get out of this porch. Otherwise I shall thrash you with a bamboo stick” (68). If any other man had been ill-treated so insolently, he would have betrayed violent reaction and embroiled himself in a squabble. But Kanaka is exceptionally magnanimous to ignore such untoward situation.

The outcome of the incidents, which befell Kanaka, bears the stamp of his magnanimity. In every incident, he has evinced his tolerance and compromising proclivity. He has never been perturbed and upset by adversity of situation. He overcomes all untoward situations with patience and nobleness. His magnanimity is surfaced in his social and religious activities. The incidents illustrated above, justify his acts of service and sacrifice of magnanimity.

Kanakadasa is a divine figure who consistently pursues for social services and realization of God by virtue of his devotion to Him. He is morally and spiritually an upright and immaculate personality who dreams of God and has a *darsan* of Him in figure. God graciously appeared to him for his magnanimity that was the keystone of his personality.

Basavaraj Naikar’s play, *The Golden Servant of God*, approximates thematically to his other play, *The Pilgrim of Life*, on account of which it is comparable with the latter. From the view point of the humanitarian virtue, both the plays, *The Pilgrim of Life* and *The Golden Servant of God*, bear a close semblance to each other on account of the similarity in the presentation of objectives and activities of the characters. In the former, one devotee of God is portrayed and his social and religious activities are highlighted; but in the later play, the characters of two awakened youths are presented with their noblest virtues. Kanaka, the principal character of the play, *The Golden Servant of God*, is depicted as a divine being, who devotes himself wholeheartedly to the service of God. He invariably sings devotional songs to propitiate Him.

In Act-II, Sc-III, he asserts his determination to dedicate himself to the service of God: “So far I served the human work sincerely and as much as I could do. But henceforth I shall be slave of God and spend the rest of my life in the service of Lord

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Hari” (23). He perceives God *vis-a-vis* by virtue of his piety and religiosity but Govinda and Sarif, the characters of the play, *The Pilgrim of Life*, attain divinity by virtue of their spiritual uprightness and accomplish stupendous task miraculously with ease.

Like Kanaka these two awakened persons are equally magnanimous in disposition and action. Their activities evince their exalted noble quality abiding in them. Govinda, the inhabitant of the village Kalasa, looks for a worthy disciple, who will be compatible with his temperament and attitude. As a matter of fact, he was looking for a spiritually upright one. Govinda speaks to his brother, Bandibhatta, “I have been searching for a flower that will never wilt or fade”. He further disqualifies his sister’s son on the ground of his spiritual bankruptcy: “He is like an empty desert. He is a zero in the field of spirituality” (TPL, 12). This statement testifies to his spiritual integrity.

Naikar’s play, *The Pilgrim of Life*, throws light on the magnanimity of two saintly characters, who invariably contemplate to ennoble and idealize their lives on the basis of religious ideology with a view to attaining salvation. They are devoid of all human vices, ego, hypocrisy, dishonesty, and iniquity for which they are regarded as saints. Although Govinda is a Brahmin by caste, he does not despise the Muslim boy Sarif. He, on the contrary, looks upon him as his son and treats him as his disciple. His intimate association with Muslim boy evidences his magnanimity. Both of them were the devotees of Lord Shiva and mother goddess Sakambari. Both, guru and disciple, had mystically gained divine power without practice of penance, meditation and yoga.

Likewise, Kanaka too attained the blessings of Adikeshava, Tirumaleswara and Lord Krishna by virtue of his magnanimity and righteousness. Since he was devoid of vices and moral weaknesses, he was spiritually capable of realizing God by the intensity of devotion. Govinda and Sarif were invariably advancing along the spiritual path to attain salvation and, in reality, they achieved their goal. Both these characters often had vision of God and heard divine voices because of their piety and holiness. Just as Kanaka is believed to have been born by the blessing of Tirumaleswara, so is Sarif also born by the blessings of goddess Sakambari and Shiva Putra of Sisunala. Both Govinda and Sarif are innately endowed with spiritual insight and prophetic vision by virtue of which they forecast any imminent untoward situation and predict the future of the villagers. They consistently endeavour to build up their personalities on the basis of moral and spiritual sanctity.

Just as Kanaka was subjected to ill-treatment and harassment for his non-Brahmin birth, Sarif was also disdained by the orthodox Brahmins; but Govinda, by virtue of his magnanimity, welcomed him to his house and treated him endearingly with love and affection. Bandibhatta, the elder brother of Govinda, expresses his

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contempt for the Muslims; but the latter defies orthodoxy and caste distinction. Whereas Kanaka is liberated from worldly attachment, Govinda and Sarif too get rid of this attachment. The latter characters are portrayed as morally and spiritually immaculate like Kanaka, who is free from any kind of vices and abuses. Sarif too perceives saintly quality in his guru Govinda by his intuitive perceptibility and looks upon him as Parameshwara.

Once Sarif was also accused of stealing the nose-stud from the village deity. He bluffed to absolve himself from the charge of theft and asserted that nose-stud was given to him by goddess herself. Sarif was exonerated from the charge of theft of nose-stud by the goddess herself who appeared compassionately and offered him the ornament in the presence of all to impart credibility to his false statement. Similarly, Kanaka was also suspected of having stolen the ornament of the icon of Krishna but he exculpated himself by his candid confession of the incident. Thus, in both the plays, Kanaka and Sarif are projected as blessed souls. Govinda and Sarif exhort moral precepts to villagers; so does Kanaka, who delivers discourses and through them, tries to refine and ennoble the lives of the villagers. The life and contributions of Kanakadasa are reminiscent of his magnanimous deeds delineated above.

If we focus on *The Golden Servant of God* with reference to Naikar's other religious play, *The Sport of Allama*, we notice considerable thematic dissimilarity between these two plays. The former is basically a religious play but the latter is woven with the thread of Indian mythology. The latter play presents the picture of a verbal contest between Girija and Lord Siva regarding the irresistible power of a woman to enchant a man by her passionate approach. She offers presumptuously a challenge to Siva with a confidence to prove it by sending a lady named Maya to the mortal world with her *tamasik* power. She empowered her to captivate a young man Allama, an incarnation of Lord Siva. Siva accepts her challenge and sends Allama to the world manifesting Himself in his personality as an artist. In this battle of contest, Maya is frustrated and disheartened by Allama, who repudiates her sensual approach considering it repugnant. Allama is insusceptible and self-resistant to passion and sensuality. He remains intransigently irresponsive and unconcerned towards sensual temptation by virtue of which he repels Maya's voluptuous advancement. This superhuman quality of Allama is illustrative of his magnanimity. Any other young man in his position would have eagerly reciprocated her love and welcomed her passionate approach. But Allama quits her kingdom being embittered by her persistent amorous trick to entangle him. Thus, Maya's attempts to enchant Allama in her love prove abortive and un-fructuous. This self-resistance proves Allama's magnanimity by virtue of which he overcomes amorous desire and professes his quality of self-restraint.

In another episode of the same play, Girija discomfits Siva by empowering her incarnated women Mahadevi to achieve success and satiety in marrying Lord

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Chennamallikarjuna of Srisaila. Although she marries a worldly man yet she abstains herself from sensual enjoyment and perseveres in her attempt to win over God as her husband. In this case of her aspiration of marriage with Mallikarjuna, Mahadevi sticks to her self-restraint and exemplifies her magnanimity by virtue of which she accomplishes her spiritual target. Any other woman in her case would have yielded to sensual approach of her worldly husband but she quits the palace of the king and goes to the city of Kalyana being disgusted by his frequent amorous advancement because of her insensibility to erotic enjoyment. Thus, her abstinence from passion and self-resistance against this vice testifies to her noblest quality of magnanimity. Thus, the play, *The Sport of Allama*, upholds the invulnerability of celestial love and denounces the sacrilege and sinfulness of earthly passion. The play tends to blend material life and spiritual life with mythical implication. It accentuates transcendence of the vice of sensual enjoyment for the sake of attaining the blessings of the Divine.

Apart from comparing *The Golden Servant of God* with Naikar's other religious plays, it is also relevant to analyse its theme with reference to other Indian religious plays written in English by Indian dramatists like Tagore, Basudev and Krishnaswamy. In all these plays, we have to trace out and point out the quality of magnanimity embodied in the characters portrayed therein.

Tagore's *Chitra* is based upon the mythological story of the *Mahabharata*. It depicts Chitrangada's consistent effort to captivate Arjuna and marry him but the latter remains tenaciously resolute to maintain celibacy and denies her offer. Arjuna professes his magnanimity by overcoming the lure of marital life but his noble quality is dissolved into erotic desire that impels him to submit to her on account of arousal of sensual desire in him. Thus, this play *Chitra* differs thematically from Naikar's play, *The Golden Servant of God*, which concentrates on Kanakadasa's consistency and steadfastness in spiritual pursuit for realization of God. His inextinguishable desire for attainment of visual contact with God leads readers to construe this experience as an act of magnanimity

Tagore's another play, *Sanyasi*, dwells on the theme of purification of soul and pursuit for attainment of salvation. This aspiration highlights Sanyasi's quality of magnanimity. The plot of this play is borrowed from Indian mythology *Vishnu Purana*. Jada Bharat, the principal character of this play, externalizes his magnanimity by resorting to the path of spiritual purification and attainment of salvation. He abdicates his kingship without any avarice for position and renounces his worldly life in order to persevere in the attainment of salvation. This religious play bears some similarity to Naikar's, *The Golden Servant of God*, in respect of pursuit for realization of God.

A comparative study of these plays leads us to infer identical objectives cherished by Jada Bharata and Kanakadasa in undergoing purification of soul and

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experiencing realization of God. Thus, their spiritual pursuit testifies to their magnanimity.

Tagore's play, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, is also a religious play that tends to focus on the mysticism of God's Will towards His appearance and disappearance. The queen of the play persists in tracing out her elusive husband, who escapes her sight on account of manifestation of God in his personality. After consistent abortive pursuit, when she fails to have a sight of her husband, she construes her husband as manifestation of the Divine. These efforts of the queen, in the pursuit of God, evince her magnanimity. The play seeks to awaken in the queen the desire for realization of God and acquisition of mystic knowledge about Him. Like the queen of the play, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, Kanakadasa also strives consistently to explore knowledge of mysticism for which he moves from one guru to another for this purpose. First of all, he is tutored by Srinivasacarya at his school and then he joins the *gurukula* ashram run by Vyasraya Swami of Sosale Monastery at Tirurma-Kudalu with a view to intensifying and widening his knowledge of God and religious principles. In the Act-III, Sc.-III, Kanaka appeals to Swamy to admit him in his monastery in order to infuse him with mystic knowledge: "I have come all the way from Kaginelli to seek spiritual knowledge of a higher kind" (55). Just as Kanaka asserts his magnanimity by professing his insatiable desire for acquisition of mystic knowledge, so does the queen in the play, *The king of the Dark Chamber*. She seeks to enlighten herself with spiritual knowledge and perseveres in her attempt to perceive God in the personality of her husband. Thus, her perseverance in the pursuit of God evinces her magnanimity

Another play, comparable to *The Golden Servant of God*, is the religious play, *Nala and Damayanti* by Basudev Rao, who builds the plot on the fabric of the epic, the *Mahabharata*. Since these mythical lovers, *Nala and Damayanti*, enjoy the game of love, they are devoid of religious inclination for spiritual pursuit. There is no vestige of magnanimity in them. They are represented as seekers after celestial pleasure but not after realization of God. Hence, they are lacking in the noble quality of magnanimity. The play is, therefore, not categorised as a religious one.

In the historical past of India, many religious preceptors had also given evidence of their magnanimity. Shankaracharya, the celebrated saint served the needy and the downtrodden by virtue of his noble propensity for welfare. Once he went to the hut of a pauper inhabitant to beg alms. As the family was impecunious, it had nothing to offer. The wife of the villager offered Shankaracharya a piece of tamarind and deplored her poverty. Her deploration melted his heart whereupon he compassionately prayed to goddess Laxmi to shower riches on the family. In response to his prayer goddess Laxmi blessed the family with affluence. This is how Shankaracharya removed the poverty of the family with a humanitarian feeling of magnanimity.

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Other Indian spiritualists have also rendered benevolent services to the people as benefactors and evinced their magnanimity. Saint Gyaneswar one day justified his statement in a controversy with the Brahmins by objectifying the omnipresence of God. He was subjected to an ordeal to prove the embodiment of God in a buffalo where upon Gyaneswar directed the animal to sing out the doctrines of the Veda. As the buffalo recited some of the lines from the Veda, the Brahmins were disgraced and they apologetically begged him forgiveness. Gyaneswar ignored their guilt and forgave them with clemency and compassion. He demonstrated the authenticity of his belief in the omnipresence of God and adduced his magnanimity. In like manner, Kanakadasa too forgave the Brahmins, when they apologized to him for their offence in denying him entrance into the sanctum of the temple of Lord Krishna at Udupi.

Unlike Chaitanya and Gyaneswar who have only shown their magnanimity in their religious activities but not in social activities other religious preachers like Dayananda, Vivekananda, Sivananda and Chinmayananda have rendered social and religious services to the people for the upliftment of the community. Dayananda reformed Hindu religion by combating the evils of superstition, untouchability, idolatry, and caste-ism and long enduring convention of child marriage. He introduced a new pattern of education based upon the gospels of the Vedas. Like Dayananda, Vivekananda also brought about social and religious reformation and launched a campaign to eliminate illiteracy, poverty and the convention of caste discrimination. Besides, he sought to illuminate people's mind about utilitarian value of the Vedanta and the Upanishad. By way of discourses, he contributed to the promotion of spiritual knowledge and consecration of religious activities. Thus, Vivekananda was impelled by virtue of magnanimity to serve the society ungrudgingly and selflessly. Sivananda too served the poor patients as a benevolent doctor. He even treated the patients at his residence free of cost. One day he lifted a pregnant woman who was left deserted by her relatives and brought her home for her safe delivery. This is an act of magnanimity that is reflected in his biography as a laudable service. Thus, all other religious luminaries have, philanthropically, served humanity with humanitarian serviceability.

*The Golden Servant of God* is conclusively established as a religious play for predominance of religiosity therein. This play is nevertheless thematically disharmonious with Naikar's other religious play, *The Sport of Allama*, for its assimilation and association with mythological sequences. The former, however, contributes to the evocation of reader's interest and faith in God. It also tends to motivate people to ennoble their lives spiritually and to promote philanthropic services for the amelioration and upliftment of Indian social life.

The play, *The Golden Servant of God*, deserves profuse encomium for skilful presentation of different episodes and characters. It serves to instil moral and ethical sense in people by way of exploitation of the theme of moral and spiritual



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value which is the key note of the play. The pervasion of religious atmosphere in the play contributes to the evocation of religious interest in readers, who eulogize this play in the moral and spiritual perspective.

With the exception of the playwrights mentioned above there are many more contemporary dramatists like Sri Aurobindo, Harindranath, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, and Mahesh Dattani. All these playwrights have written on the contemporary social issues and not on religious themes; but Karnad has produced a few plays, which are tinged with Indian mythology. His plays are nevertheless much dissimilar from religious plays because of their assimilation with mythology. Hence, these are excluded from the comparison and contrast with modern religious plays.

Although a number of religious plays have been written in English by Modern Indian dramatists, they can hardly surpass the excellence and the superiority of Naikar's religious plays for exuberance of religiosity in them. They tend to assert their identity and magnitude for unprecedented conception of theme and skilful presentation of the theme in the form of dramatization. *The Golden Servant of God* gains enormous popularity among religious-minded persons, who consider spiritual pursuit as the *summum bonum* of their lives. This play serves as a source of inspiration for conquest of vices as a stepping stone towards transcendentalization of worldly life and attainment of salvation. This play has to be widely reckoned as *magnum opus* in the spiritual perspective. In the annals of Indian drama written in English, such religious plays are rarely produced by modern playwrights; and, hence, it has to be treasured as a literary monument of enduring value for its embodiment of exalted theme of religious significance. This book imperatively necessitates its wide publicity for promotion of its readability and literary venture for academic pursuit.

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## **The Achievement of the Poet - Sukrita Paul Kumar**

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*Our scriptures, monumental artefacts, placed women on the highest pedestal. With dignity this sublime averment is pronounced. Rendered into English it goes like this: 'Where women are held in respect / There move the celestials.'*

*(Eko rasah karuna eva –Bhavabhuti 4-5 BC)*

Sukrita, born in Kenya and travelled to and from Mugabe and Mumbai, saw and experienced a lot removed far from our shores. The addition, to her collection *Untitled*, at the end of the book, speaks of her varied accomplishments and distinguishing qualities. Daughter of reputed writer/ painter, Sukrita took to academics, poetry and painting as a duck takes to water – not a cliché here. Reading her poetry needs our hearts in the right place. To put it in other words, it is like glancing at the sea, where the shore is nowhere in sight – wondering at the ebb and the tide.

In the process of writing  
I am ahead of myself always  
And there's no look back

The rest of the time / I am stalking myself  
And there's no looking ahead  
The issue is / That of keeping pace. (Sukrita)

To begin with *Untitled* (2014), the title, needs no title, since it is a communication of the pulsations in the heart and brain, deep, captivating and, more importantly, path-breaking. Her poetry is inward-looking, searching for the shores, looking up at the sky and losing one's self in thought. Thanks to her educational and other various qualifications, she has penning experience which includes the paint and brush too. She worked and participated in literary festivals in India and abroad. She is recognized and worked in literary organizations like ICCR, Sahitya Akademi, Bharatiya Jnanpith, Poetry Society of India and some universities also.

*Untitled* (2014) is her first collection of poems and a little later, *Ink and Line*, another collection with painting and poems in the same year. The publishing house Vani published her *Dream Catcher* along with slender little one, *Behind the Poems*. "The Art of Wearing Bangles" is the first poem. There is a connection between the art of writing poetry and loving and wearing bangles. Both have significance and

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finesse. Pleasure and a symbol of pride and satisfaction are all there in wearing bangles. Here is what the poet has in her mind:

The blank page bears words  
With the fondness and patience  
Of girls wearing glass bangles  
One by one, carefully and gently  
... ..  
They are not to dangle loose and wide  
Or remain too close and feel the skin

Let them take over the throb / Jingle in glee, glide into action  
Tune into the dance / of a poem / on the page. (Untitled , 11)

The other poet, Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India, wrote about bangle sellers. But here is the poet singing about jingle and glee.

The words in the poem have to come in like breathing in life. They gallop too like a trained horse which cajoles the rider with enthusiasm. The poet suggests to the writer to get on to the saddle and reach out to those ‘still’ words that fly the rock of silence which lies in wait. One has to soar high and higher:

From the black holes  
Of the universes, seen and unseen,  
Through meteor storms and  
Somersaulting planets  
The hand has to appear pointing  
This way / That way (“How to Begin”, 14)  
Conceiving and delivering a poem is one great act of enlightenment, a matter of delicacy.

The poet sees in Aurangabad Sulibhajan Temple, a place of worship. Temples are the sacred gifts of a person, who gave to man the soul-elevating contemplation called tapas. The poet pays a tribute to the seer:

Sulibhajan / The sacred gift of / Tapasvi Aiknath,  
... ..  
Here, in complete isolation  
Outside time, / Dogs and stones create  
Fellowship in suffering and joy... (15-16)

The poet has many an arrow in her flowery quiver of enlightenment, wisdom and the peace that passes understanding.

Ideas, feelings, emotions, compassion and *ardrata*, get mixed up raising treasure troves for the poet and, through her, the understanding and appreciative reader – from Vasco de Gama, Quit India, Spices and pepper, along with tales hidden in layers and layers one over the other, lower and lower and higher and higher. There is glory in the poem “Liberation at Kappad, Calicut” (Kozhikode), if you please.

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Each wave on this beach  
Brings a throb from the  
Heart of the Indian Ocean  
Sighs from history  
... ..  
Tales hidden / Layers on layers  
Spilling over / Bleeding on the sands and  
Washing away at once. (18-19)

The poet was the guest editor of a poetry session in the University of Hawaii and the poem, “Ambers in the Pacific”, is about the mythology of their islands: Maui, the ancient chief is the culture hero who appears in many genealogues. Kumulipo is the son of Akalana and his wife Hina. Maui is cognate with Maui, the Hawaiian island. The poem refers to the myths which make enticing reading. (It is interesting to note that this poet guest-edited *Crossing Over*, a special issue of a journal of the University of Hawaii, Manoa, USA.)

Islands with white shores  
Combating tiger waves  
Islands held in Kumulipo  
The Creation chant / In multiple rainbows  
That Hina climbed / To reach the moon  
When the moon is full / They see her / In the tides that rise  
They hear her / In the rumbling belly / Of the dormant volcano.  
Mauna Kea . . . (“Ambers on the Pacific”, 20-21)

The poet is fond of mythology, folklore, and belief. “The Strange Gift of Sharad Poornima” is about Hindu feeling and belief. The poem describes both:

From the center of the earth  
It rose as a streak of lightning  
And entered the soles of my feet  
... ..  
and thought:  
The bright ray of the sun / Pierced the dark clouds  
Broke open my head / Settling in the cage  
  
Whiffs of reason and logic / Filling the cranium  
Stretched in anguish as if / In search of madness ... (23)

Himachal, Kashmir, Valley of Flowers, Line of Actual Control are described in a poem with a clear imaginative, poetic vision. In “Out of the Box” another world was seen beyond stars.

That this world has worlds / beyond the stars  
I did not know.  
... ..  
Bits of truth buried / in the graveyard of words  
rose as if from the vaults / in the bottom of the sea

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like fireflies / lighting the dark shores of life. (24-25)

“Meta Cacophony” is a poem about words and their myriad powers, effects and meanings.

Words are weapons / Hurlled to hurt, to cause pain  
Even to kill / Over and over again.

... ..

Words are winged tools  
of communication / flying and merging  
into the black hole of silence  
deep in the centre of our galaxy. (26-27)

The poet has mastery over words. Only poets know how best to use what words at what time. The nature and quality of words are multitudinous and not many are cacophonous.

Good poetry lends itself to interpretation and explanation and leaves many things only to the ability of the reader to understand. Sukrita is of the stature of great poets. “Mountain Nights” is about fear, dreams, and feelings of anxiety and even a kind of neurotic outburst. It is surrealistic at times:

The big thud on the roof / That cracked the rocky silence  
Of sleep day after day / Was that of a flying fox  
with wings that do not / carry its weight into the firmament  
Not combat mountain fog. (28)

There is horror, real horror, in human acts in “The Hazara Poem”. Screams of Hazara captives sold as slaves in 1893, in Afghanistan, brought the following idea:

Birthing and dying sounds / incubating and gestating  
babies born in anguish / and the emerging poems  
paving the way / to dreaming  
the dreams of homing... (p. 29)

The poet is an intellectual, a spiritualist, and essentially a woman and she goes on citing instances of the fiendish behaviour of inhuman demons. “The Myth of Recreation” is again about horror. There is reference to Columbus landing on the shores. A series of references to horror take us to the devilish human cruelty.

Every inch savagely cultivated  
Beauty a metaphor of atrocity  
Moments of joy  
Pumped from the lungs on ventilators  
Men and women in love  
their hearts beating on pace makers (30)

Mithila, the land of Janaki, the Ganga, Patna and raising questions with images and metaphors are here in the journey by team boat into the throbbing heart of Bihar. The poet goes fast deep inside the sloughs and scales the peaks too and the

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more the reader reads her poems the more the vastness increases filling his heart.

The idiom and the turn of expression become unique when compassion and kindness bring out the feeling of basic humanism. “What am I to her and she to me” talks of the growth of intimacy and relationship. In “Seven moons away is when I met her” – see the expression moon – not a day in travel. The speaker of the poem sends up a prayer:

I hear, you are from Delhi  
-the city of power- / get me shelter  
get me food and clothes... (32)

And then this happy ending:

what has woven those threads between us,  
do our ancestors awaken each full moon  
to connect us  
she calls me and I rise to walk tiptoe  
on the rays of light / and embrace her. (33)

Many tales, many feelings and many experiences are told and retold in many languages described in the *Folk Lore Society of London*. The fast shifting scenes, the men and women and their languages are evocative in the poem “A Tale Untold”.

Some of the poems take a little time and careful study to understand and appreciate. Here is the sum and substance of Sukrita’s thought in her poem “Where Shall I Write”. I quote the poem in full:

Where shall I write / the paper twists in pain  
all space is in awkward crinkles  
Where shall I paint / The canvas fills  
with sighs and whispers  
As I lift those brushes / I carry the cross  
nailed by / Unborn poems, aborted paintings  
Neither living / Nor dead (48)

There are very small poems that display her mindset which I must include in full to do justice to the very unique poet, who called them “Some Little Ones”:

Terror struck bees / Buzzing in harnets  
Yellow sun  
shooting out of black clouds (“Some Little Ones”, 57)

Buddha / in / grey stone  
Melting / in White peace (58)

Through the stillness / of my walk  
The forest dancing / in foggy silence (59)

A scream shooting through  
the eye of the needle  
The baby / is / born. (60)

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What glorious thoughts and how well expressed! Melting, white, peace are key words for a galaxy of thinking.

Sukrita's paintings, like her poems, need quite long spells of time to look deep to take a glimpse of her personality. The best way to peep into her mind is to spend hours looking at the paintings and guessing the nuances of her imagination. Eliot's *Wasteland* had to wait for exegetes to lift the curtains of the poet's thinking. Sukrita's many poems need exegesis. This poet is enchanting when understood with her references and dedication to the great women saints, Lal Ded (Kashmiri Shiva Yogini), Akka Mahadevi (of Kannada Desa) and Andal of Tiruppavai in Tamil. Painting and Poetry going together hand in hand is the latest addition of another genre of imaginative creativity and ebullient enthusiasm. Sukrita published her *Dream Catcher* (2014) as two different volumes. One in the normal 1/8 demi size. And the other *Behind the Poems – Dream Catcher*, in the fancy 1/16 size.

The Ojibwe, natives of North America and their Midewiwin Society, are respected as the keeper of scrolls of events, oral history, songs, stories and memories etc. They believed that the dreams we have while we sleep, are sent by sacred spirits as messages. According to their belief, in the centre of the Dream Catcher there is a hole. Good dreams are permitted to reach the sleeper through this hole in the web. As for the bad dreams, the web traps them and they disappear at dawn with the first light. For some, they try to determine what messages are being passed on to them and what the message represents. The poet states that the poems came from her sojourn in China etc and are 'sieved' from her memory of some odd dream-like reality.

Faith leads to devotion and compassion, to femininity. All the four are closely related. In *Dream Catcher*, we see seven paintings and read forty poems. Some have titles and some don't. The poems, in the 'Tsunami Snap Shots' section, are not titled and they are very short and very telling. "The Woman with a Baby" is about Nature, a mother's feeling. There is a mention of many nations but the basic insight is just the same.

Tiny movements rising / in our bellies,  
fish churning the ocean,  
birds flapping wings in the skies  
and eyelids, drooping and batting heavy,  
to enter / or exist the bliss of sleep. (*Dream Catcher*, 12)

For one immersed in the study of nature, China and Tai Chi are places among many. "Tai Chi" has this for the reader to think about:

High strung and pulled to the  
Roots in the eyes of the other  
Stillness finely balanced  
On the thread of their version. (13)

## Ramarao Vadapalli. V. B.

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“Heights” is a very brief but very intensely imagined reality:

The Seventh floor / Tells Buddha’s tale  
Above desire, above suffering  
One day I was born / One day I shall die (15)

Mother’s touch is incomparable – it is divine. In “The Mad Woman on the Avenue of Stars”, the Chinese woman is viewed thus in the poet’s mindscape:

Chinese wrinkles / Giggling and breaking into  
shimmering creaks / And vales twinkling  
The old woman tearing her hair  
Squealing in Cantonese glee  
clearing cobwebs of silence / that masks multitudes  
amidst din of stars. (20-21)

Only an extraordinary poet can write the last three lines.

There are twelve snaps in ‘Tsunami Snapshots’. In “The Chinese Cemetery” this is about a child’s exit:

In The World of Suzie Wong  
Consumed the baby, / And then lapped up  
the letter of introduction –  
“To whom-so-ever it may concern:  
Flames are messengers / Carrying the known  
To the unknown / Life after life. (23)

The grimness sends shivers down our spines. ‘Tsunami Snapshots’ are brief heart-rending sighs, not mere poems without titles:

When the waves / relented and brought  
the baby back on / the shores  
snakes took over / and created a lap  
of poison /to keep death  
out of boundaries. (25)

There is another snapshot if it is just that one:

The dog is / God  
Dragging the child / Out of tsunami thunder  
Licking the wounds / And restoring sanity in nature.  
But that dog is / Not God  
-he saved / this child  
and let others perish. (27)

The devastation and the horror are maddening.

The sea is called Kadalamma, Mother Sea; Kadali is sea and Amma is mother, in Telugu. The cataclysm and catastrophe were hell bent on devouring all and everything:

But today the sea



## The Achievement of the Poet - Sukrita Paul Kumar

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Swallowed her children / Her womb bleeding  
Kadalamma had betrayed / Her trust. (33)

“New Life” explains ‘tsunami’, the Japanese word:

Sucking in / Frolicking humanity  
With the first cry / Of the baby,  
They named her / Tsunami. (37)

“End from the Beginning” and “Tughlak” are about Mohammed bin Tughlaq, and the following lines are from the latter:

Disengaging from / Barauni’s diaries  
Ageless / Friendless  
... ..  
His steps measured and heavy  
Inching towards / The ocean of meaning  
where sanity drowns  
And madness / Triumphs. (45-46)

The drawings in this book are of varied numbers, perhaps of sari *pallus*. There are twelve poems on snow in ‘Winter Poems at Minnesota’ in their various avatars.

Black snow on the road / Is treacherous  
as the white night / At full moon  
Snowflakes in mid air / Looking for the ground  
To settle or / Melt away. (53)

This poem is subtly suggestive:

Snow women / Lonesome  
on the white streets / of the white continent. (57)

Then this is the state of penguins:

Emperor penguins / Hold their babies  
in their body folds / through months of  
Arctic blizzards / Ruling with  
Power over the universe. (62)

The poet describes how the “Dream Catcher” holds her under its power. Just a few bits for a taste:

Each time I came home with a bagful  
Of dreams / That drip through the day  
For me and all / Each night  
I wait for a new dawn. (65)

“In Corpses” dedicated to Kavita Karkare, she mourns pitifully:

You stood still / By the side of the  
Bulleted body / of your husband  
You / More dead than he (66)

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Of the mourning over various holocausts in Partition, Gujarat etc; there is this question:

Can language combat reality,  
Rid one of / Memory ? (68)

“My Lost Diary” written in words in which the alphabet soaked heavy with phantoms and angels there is this:

Hai Ram / At war with the whole world  
And with self / Stuck in the sticky cobwebs here (73)

The last section is adorned with the painting of a six-piece *pallu*, if it is that really. The first poem in this section is “The Chosen One”. It is about monkeys and chestnut trees:

Roots in knots / The tree barren  
Is silhouette in moon light  
Has monkeys in it /With chestnuts  
As if / between their teeth. (88)

The poet has special knack of looking around, within, beyond the situations and happenings in the world with men and women seeing what they are. Sukrita’s poems live long being remembered by soft and tenderly sensitive minds. One last word about the little book, *Behind Poems – Dream Catcher*: This may be taken as the poet’s *apologia pro vita sua*. Here are a few of her statements in “Other” and “I”:

The blank sheet stares back at me in defiance each time I sit to write a poem. (“Other”, 8)  
I urge all words to vanish into their sounds and merge into the total experience of the poem. (“Other”, 11)  
Often have I wondered why I did not write a poem about my intense relationship with my grandmother; why did I write the story, ‘Visitation’, instead? (“I”, 38)

And then, finally, she wrote the poem “Connections” – which can be termed *ne plus ultra* – on her granny starting thus:

Thank you, amma  
for the moon, thank you. (39)

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**K. Rajamouly**

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**Manas Bakshi's Poetic Concern for Human  
Relation: An Overview with a Special Reference to  
*Parnassus of Revival***

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A poet is one who has an observant eye and a sensitive heart for human concern and social relation in the welfare of man. He marks a clear-cut distinction by virtue of his distinctive features and special characteristics in the genre of poetry. No two poets are alike or same but they may be similar or dissimilar in presenting thematic treasures and poetic ideals, technical brilliance and artistic excellence. Here is a poet belonging to the class of poets par excellence in the galaxy of contemporary Indian English poets. He is none other than Dr. Manas Bakshi, who occupies a significant place in the poetic panorama by virtue of his rare merits in the contemporary era.

In the anthology of poems, *Parnassus of Revival*, Manas Bakshi deals with kaleidoscopic themes underlying life. Time with its past, present and future and man's predicament in time's reign, nature with its lovely scenes, social evils, lacking in faith in human relations, dilemmas, perplexities, confusions, conflicts, degeneration of values, degradation of standards, anarchy and so on in the current society enriched his thematic plenty. He delineates the wide range of themes employing striking imagery, felicity of word-clusters or expressions and precise and crispy lines to exemplify his poetic dynamics.

Manas Bakshi grows into a humanist by virtue of his good background or sweet disposition. He criticizes the present society for lacking in human relations and social concerns. The prevalent social distinctions and discriminations, status variations and economic depressions to cause inequalities and injustices are against his principle as a poet and man. Through the spectrum of poetry, he shares his heart-felt feelings to the readers in the most convincing and appealing way.

As a poet and man, Manas Bakshi is deeply committed to man's peaceful existence and human relations. Man to aim at man-for-man or human relation, therefore, becomes the focus and fulcrum of his poetry. He presents his feelings, moods, experiences, findings, happenings, and so on. He has broad mission and wide vision as a poet of human relations and concerns.

A poet of human consciousness and social awareness is bound to respond to all the evils confronting the society today. I quote my definition of poetry from my article on Susheel Kumar Sharma featured in **Language, Literature and Culture:**

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Every poet lets us listen to his heart-throbs for our heart-responses. It is his primary goal and bounden responsibility to describe events, incidents, experiences, dilemmas, problems, etc that he glimpses and witnesses in life. Poetry is his medium and spectrum he expresses through, and weapon and organ he fights with for the aimed reforms and desired solutions. It rises from the reality and the actuality of life in the way the plant rises from the ground of truths to bloom the flowers of facts.

As a poet, Manas Bakshi believes that poetry is the expression of realities that lurk in his mind and heart. The poem, “A Poem of Untold Moments” (26), reflects his views on poetry,

Words not always enough to delineate

The bubble surfacing on / A purple heart’s edge—

...            ...            ...

That is always a poem / Of untold moments

In untold words / Of metaphoric exuberance.

As a poet, Bakshi defines a good poem as a choice, preferred to any material offer, the only option for him as unfolded in his poem, “Aesthetic Balm” (9). It should touch the heart by a message of consolation as a lesson for the reader’s inevitable learning,

What will you opt for / A handful of *Dehradun* rice

Or, a fine poem that touches a lacerated heart,

As the winter-end breeze blowing over

The paddy field after harvest?

Manas Bakshi’s love for man is the nucleus theme of his. He, as a poet and man, loves the race of man; so, he wishes man’s world to be safe and peaceful. He exhorts every individual to grow into an ideal family and all families into society to reflect human values. His appeal to the race of man ultimately culminates in his universal wish that the earth must be safe. In “Caution” (7), he indirectly appeals to the race of man to live in happiness, saving the earth, the world for man’s existence, averting all evil happenings

Don’t destroy me / To destroy yourself...

...            ...            ...

Your first succour, last resort

It’s me, Mother Earth.

The poet identifies with Mother Earth and appeals to his fellow-man with profound feelings of helplessness to stop his act,

Don’t bite / To bring out

My last drop of blood...

Humanism is the heart of Manas Bakshi’s poetry for he loves family relations. In the poem, “Smile a Day” (61) he gives full marks for marital ties and familial

## **Manas Bakshi's Poetic Concern for Human Relation: An .....**

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relations,

But full marks? / Sorry, I can't!  
Have my wife and children  
Waiting till I breathe my last.

The poet loves conjugal life as the ideal and preferential one for it gives him solace and bliss. What man gets in marital relations is missing in extramarital relations. In "Surrealistic" (21), he distinguishes the marital with the kiss to bestow on man bliss and the extramarital with a 'secret kiss' to be short-lived and 'half-finished',

Halcyon days are short-lived / As a secret kiss,  
Looking back often means / The surfacing of a hidden urge  
To refurbish all / That is half-hearted, half-finished;

For the poet, love is pure. It is the choicest emotion. In the poem, "Moving Leeward" (27), he criticizes the lovers today for their non-commitment to love. They are not true lovers. It is for their temporary pleasures:

And love—  
Mere a conjunction  
Dominating a secluded space  
Of momentary togetherness

Manas Bakshi's faith in humanity is comprehensive and compulsive on the part of man. In "Moving Leeward" (27), he, therefore, loves humanity built with the bricks of faith in cordial, harmonious human relations and peaceful existence of man,

When faith is no more  
A condition of living,  
Marriage seldom sacred  
Relations often sartorial  
Down a life-line  
Staid, turmoil-stained.

Truth to reflect love in man helps man love fellow men to have unity as a sign of humanity. The poem, 'Clairvoyance-like' (8) expresses the truth, the truth of humanity,

Truth is the moment of love  
We feel united / Since birth.

He advises his fellow beings, in "What Likely the Art of Living Is" (44), to wish for the safe existence of man, maintaining man-to-man relations in the age of man-created barriers,

Only for  
Raising a storm inside the orbit  
Of the suffering human psyche  
Mired in the textures  
Of relations mechanized.

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Manas Bakshi is against human suffering. He does not like inequalities and injustices, discrimination and humiliation, so on. He is upset more and more with male domination to result in gender discrimination. For him, poetry springs from pain. This idea is expressed in “Parnassus of Revival” (14). The theory of his poetry is that it begins in the pain of a girl-child and it is evident in the lines,

Poetry beginning with pain  
As a girl child / Born wretched  
On the Indian soil...

His poetry mirrors his bitter feelings and unbearable experiences in the sad incidents of humiliation meted out to women in the long past, the past, and the present. He portrays his deep concern for woman in his first poem, “Indian Woman” (1). The feelings related to the incidents of humiliation to women haunt him and hurt his heart deeply: for, he has high reverence and soft corner for women. He identifies with the woman in suffering,

An Indian woman, / An emblem of duty to family  
And love for husband, / Affection to children  
And devotion the Creator,  
Sustaining for aeon / The legacy, lechery and lapses  
Of a male-dominated domain—

He identifies with woman in different aeons. She faces ‘the fire ordeal’ to prove her chastity. How it is to see her suffering! He shares the suffering of Sita as she suffers for no fault of hers,

Having no fault of my own  
...     ...     ...  
Had to face a fire ordeal—  
To prove my chastity / With feminine courage.

As a poet and man, Bakshi shares the woes and throes of the Pandavas. He feels that the action of the Kauravas as ‘shameless’. He shares Draupadi’s suffering, identifying with her. The suffering of women did not lost but continued as ‘a stigma of yore!’ to the 20th century,

The legacy followed / Even in the 20th century  
To adorn me with a crown / Of a royal devotee,  
Offered forever to the deity / Of imposed myth  
And imagined glory-gaiety!  
Neither a Goddess / Nor a call girl  
Branded Devdasi— (2)

He has deep anguish for the tragic fate of ‘Lower caste woman in Kerala!’ a hundred years ago. He expresses his vehement protest, identifying with her, saying,

I preferred chopping of my breast  
To paying tax

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To the king of Travancore  
For covering up the same. (3)

It is shameful to think of the humiliation meted out to woman in the form of molestation and rape even in the 21st century in the so-called civilized society with the sense of equality in the democratic setup,

I am that Manipuri girl  
Baring my body in vehement protest—  
Many of you / 21st century civilized male  
Unblushing, unfazed, remorseless  
Just relax again!

Bakshi as a human being feels ashamed of victimizing a woman to unbearable agony and suffering. He wishes woman to be very strong to avert all the evils related to her and fight like Indian soldiers for her motherland,

I've the fighting spirit  
Of Razia Sultana,  
The indomitable courage of Rani of Jhansi,  
The patriotic spark of Matangini Hazra  
And the undying zeal of Kalpana Chawla; (3)

Years glide on in time's ride but there is no change in woman's fate and existence. She becomes a victim to rape, sometimes rape and murder, stealing her money and treasures, the triple crime. There are ghastly incidents of rape of babies, girls and women of any age for the satiation of man's barbaric act in his demonic lust. He feels hurt for the pathetic and tragic plight of Nirbhaya identifying with her,

My fate hasn't been changed—  
Still I am one after another Nirbhaya  
In the hands of the criminals  
Gang raped and slain! (4)

Woman lives in the society today amidst fears confronting her all the times. She feels insecure because of brutalities and cruelties of man's violence in various forms.

The poet feels sorry for the inhuman act of foeticide. To resort to foeticide by a woman in modern age is a sinful act. He wishes to have security for woman against prevalent insecurity in the present society,

Sorry to say / I have neither a foeticide-free sky  
Nor the deserved / Social security reign! (4)

Manas Bakshi, as an optimist, whole-heartedly wishes that the people should change the pitiable plight of woman in the present inhuman scenario,

I will, for sure, one day  
Make India worthy  
Of woman's existence— (4)

The poet feels that a child gladdens its family by its sweet smile and

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strengthens the nation by its brilliant caliber and career when grown. He wishes that no foul means should spoil the child's smile. In "Bugbear" (11), he equates 'child' that gladdens the near and dear with 'flower' that sweetens the atmosphere,

A smiling flower  
A smiling child  
Bliss of Nature  
Sacred and divine  
Flower torn  
Smile forgotten  
Religious fanaticism: a knife  
Flashing vengeance  
From behind.

The poet presents the portrait of man and woman living in an unwelcome situation against his wishes in the poem, "Unmasking" (15),

I will make a portrait  
Of man and woman  
Going deep into the realm

Where the trite terms  
Of a prosaic living entail  
A nomadic shibboleth,

Where everyone's  
Aimless wandering

The society today is mired in numerous ill-treatments to the poor, 'Pavement dwellers and pedestrians' as the sign of marginalization. There is no way set to solve their problems. In the poem, "Live from Kolkatta Pavement" (30), the poet presents the city's realistic picture to reflect their pathetic plight of the poor for miserable lives,

Marginalized as they are since birth  
Groveling for survival in shady shanties,  
Like the very footpath  
Sheltering the alive and the dead

The poll promises go in vain. The promises are the words wrought on the surface of water. The leaders are in fact for good governance as per democracy but not poli-tricking. The poet aptly compares votes to fallen leaves to say that they have no value and power after elections. He presents the most unwelcome situation,

Vote is over,  
Torn ballot papers  
Mute as the fallen leaves  
Can't divulge the secrets of poli-tricking

The nature-lyric depicting the sun, in "Saluting the Sun" (54), making a fact that there are unwanted children and they might not know their male parents. The children grow to be unruly and violent with every possibility of turning terrorists,



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Justice? No, not the real cause,  
It's all myth  
Really is virgin mothers  
Of unwanted child still  
Scream in the blind alleys of life,  
And Karnas today  
Often turn terrorists!

The poet presents the picture of the world today in the poem, "Introspection" (12). He unfurls the fact: he is against absurdities and calamities,

It's is a polarized world  
Some having more than needed  
Some having nothing, superseded  
Some enjoying nocturnal glee  
In longing eyes  
Some dying in the street  
After day-long pitched fight!

The poem, "Aesthetic Balm" (9), lends a poetic utterance to his ideas about the pathetic plight of the people in the prosaic society today,

We're wandering in wilderness  
Craving for a festival of colours  
For minds and stress  
For eyes away from  
The wonder of a poetic landscape!

In "Dwelling on a Stone God" (19), the poet expresses the indifferent attitude of God to man's resorting to violent ways, "The stark residue of a stone-God / Showing neither anger nor smile" (19). The poet ironically unfolds the view that God is busy having so many schedules that He is not able to redress man's grievances. Thus, man throws the sole blame on God for His being over busy,

For God  
Always acting like a minister  
Overburdened with several portfolios  
Is never spared with a single blame  
In human eyes full of vengeance! (19)

Here the poet echoes the satirical vein of Kamala Das on the life of hypocrisy in the hues of reality led by many in the society today and God is in heaven away from man with the sense of hypocrisy as presented in her poem, "Fancy-Dress Show", "God is in his heaven and all / Is right with this stinking world".

The society is full of 'miseries and mistake'. In "A Cyber Age Poem" (10), he wishes man in the society today to be 'neo-human' and all the past history not to repeat in the present,

Cyber age; world seems within reach.  
Flower, fruits and vegetables—all hybrid...  
Days nearing the pinnacle of global warming  
For a fresh start with neo-human seed?

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The poet loves peace from the heart of his hearts in “As the Pigeons Saw It” (63). He expresses his love for peace by the traditional symbol of pigeons, ‘Flying in a jubilant mood’. He loves India for its universal peace and communal harmony,

Some white pigeons  
Messengers of peace  
... ..  
Crossing the border  
They felt comfortable and safe  
In the peace-loving Indian territory,

The poet says that the pigeons had good image about our nation as it was meant for peace and so they felt comfortable to enter it. They felt disappointed as they found all chaos and unrest in India today against their expectations in a peace loving country,

The pigeons felt sorry for  
Being driven to a wrong place,  
Felt ashamed too  
For being stripped off  
Their hallowed image!

The anthology mirrors the state of lacking in man-to-man, man-to-woman, man-to-nature, man-to-God relations in human society, especially, in the present time. It is slender but it is a good blender of all noble thoughts and bright ideas for their beauty in variety like the pretty flowers put together into an exquisitely beautiful garland. The varied beauty of *Parnassus of Revival* bestows gaiety on the readers.

Dr. Manas Bakshi has excellent poetic career, spanning four decades and winning encomiums from the literary firmament. Through the medium of his poetry, he marks variety by the rich use of evocative imagery, symbolic modes, thematic variety, and artistic excellence for the snapshot delineation of widespread evils: injustices and prejudices, hypocrisies and jealousies, inequalities and insecurities, and so on, in the current society. He is not a silent spectator but a keen observer of evils and events, he witnesses in the spectrum of society. He records all his feelings, expectations, experiences, observations, happenings, etc to fulfill his poetic objective from the social perspective. His poetry mirrors the society he lives in. It satirizes the evils in the society. Thus, he proves to be a poet par excellence from the soil of the poets like Rabindranath Tagore.

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**Mrinal Kanti Das**

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## **Exploration of Humanistic Insight in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra**

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### **Abstract**

Literature is packed with the instances of outstanding humanistic insights. Whether Indian writing in English or other types, the arrival of post-structuralism and postmodern era, right from the late 1960s and 1970s of the last century to these days of early twenty-first century, are only numerous factors of humanism. These humanism and human concerns can be explored much in Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry. Like a true humanist, he tries to review the truth by placing himself in the midst of the ruins of the temples, traditions, rites, rituals, superstitions, beliefs and the other side of modern life and recording his responses to it. His poetry reads like a story submerged with a never-ending concern and sympathy for humanity. He takes people into so much assurance that he never doubts their aptitude to convert them from their inexorable humanity.

**Key Words** - humanism, explore, traditions, submerged, aptitude.

**Modern humanism** stands for faith in humanity. OS Guinness explains that the word 'humanist' means only an anxiety for humanity and this modern secular humanism grew, with the growth of an important split between reason and religion. In spite of there being many variants of humanism such as 'Scientific', 'ethical', 'democratic', 'religious', and 'Marxist' etc, 'humanism' is a complete life's attitude that upholds human motive, ethics, and justice, and rejects supernaturalism, pseudoscience and superstition. In the present scenario, he believes in making human attempt to attain anything. He sounds firm about his decisions in the scenario heightening ones humanistic concerns:

And I don't want to be a beggar unwillingly caught up in the middle of the crowd. I want the graveyard to flower without its corpses, and the sunlit street to shine without its shadows I want the flames to warm the empty heart of love, not burn a city with pitiable hatred. I don't want to sit bent over a page to reflect in it my grief. *Living in Orissa* refers to the evil system of 'Devadasis', a kind of prostitution flourished by the side of temples, expressing his scorn for the system. Someone goes on dancing at the doors of indifferent temples, carrying pain in an eyeless face. (Guinness:13)

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Jayanta Mahapatra depicts the problem of human life. He judges social and political issues from a humanist's angle. One could see such a powerfully practical picture of a victim in his favourite poem 'Hunger', which deals with youthful prostitution to stave off hunger. A. Paniker points out that "the woman is passive and not an active share in the guilt; she takes to it mechanically, tired and bored,

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without even professional game. She has little passion and her flesh is only a commercial commodity for the customers like the flesh of the goats slaughtered by the butcher” (83). To Mahapatra, the Odishan landscape is the objective setting of his psychological growth, the phases of which get mixed up with the lyrical expressions of humanist principle. Mahapatra surveys every incident with humanistic eye, not allowing his classical learning or his knowledge in the myth and legend to colour his outlook.

Poetry is superbly dealt with human concerns. Jayanta Mahapatra’s poems are a sort of pictures in which the poet expresses his eagerness to come back to conditions with himself as a person and a poet as well. The present study narrates these elements to set up that a creator as self has a couple of selves through the suffering and concern reflecting on social inequalities, conflict, and ecological differences. It succeeds to analyse and to throw light on the character and social reality of human life by defining the poet’s self, society and the truth of each with reference to the selected poems.

Jayanta Mahapatra’s poetry abounds in human concerns. His writing is an award-winning tradition of humanity. He has travelled through the difficulties of place and the process of harmony beyond. The social reality, in the selected poems of Jayanta Mahapatra, is undertaken in an effort to simplify whether or not the identical aspects of poetry, the inner and the outer forces, have influenced the proposed writer within the making of his poetic composition. Being an Indian, Jayanta Mahapatra wants to raise the significance of Indian poetry in English.

Mahapatra has made a massive contribution to Indian English poetry with his investigational matters and instinctive poetic expression. Poverty, prostitution, patriarchy, crime, and the folk’s pleasure and discomfort of Odisha are steadily portrayed and tuned in his poems and become his touching and divine self. He portrays human conditions mostly in India in particular emphasizing the communally debilitating issues such as corruption, social prejudice, communal discord, biological imbalance etc.

From the poems of Mahapatra, we find that the poet is very absolutely rooted in his native soil of Orissa. There is a landscape formed by means of Puri, Konark, Cuttack, and Bhubaneswar. We study an outstanding deal about the legends, history, and allegory connected with these places. Puri, in Orissa, is measured to be a holy location for the Hindus. They fervently worship Lord Jagannath, the presiding deity of Orissa. “Dawn at Puri” and “Main Temple Street” are the poems that deal with the value of Puri and what it means to the Hindus. Widows wish to spend their last days at Puri believing that it will fetch them their salvation. The poet expresses this emotion that the last wish of a widow is to be cremated here. This poem is not a collection of mere comments, a place here, a character there, an un-strenuous meditation or two, expected landscapes, but a firm, combined set of selections built

## Exploration of Humanistic Insight in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra

into the theme. For the poet, the Odishan landscape is the unbiased setting of his mental evolution, the phases of which get mixed up with the poetic expressions of a humanist doctrine.

Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry reads like a story covered with a limitless concern and sympathy for humanity. He takes people into so much confidence that he does not remedy to doubting their usual humanity and he never worries their ability to exchange themselves. Mahapatra, only, gently raises the issues without ever assuming any consistent tone. He never makes pronouncements. They are only friendly suggestions. Mahapatra's poetry defies any linear, balanced progression of narration, the key cause being that he does not follow clinically accurate methods to arrive at the point of study. His poetry is not a single plan or attitude but a set of ideas and emotions recollected in agitation, which often beat him in surpassing all barriers of time, place, and reason. Like a true humanist, he does not believe in any scientific method and his doubt about the perfection of all though only aims at delivering the utmost good to the society. In all, he is as human in his manner as the sway of the Bible – "Love thineighbour, as thy love thineself" (Whedbee: 67). He shows as much respect as it is due to a human.

Poems, like "A Missing Person", "Hunger", "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street", "30th January 1982: A story" and "The Twenty fifth Anniversary of a Republic: 1975", identify the individual's social assurance to social reality. They voice the poet's contradictory concerns over the existing life. Mahapatra depicts the predicament of human life. He dwells on hunger, hostility, and terrorism. The poet identifies himself with the compound evils of the society as a humanist. He assesses social and political issues with a humanist's angle.

Mahapatra has captured, in many of his poems, the aching reality of life of the poor. Mahapatra is used to seeing scarcity and pain around him that in his poem *Relationship* (1980) he writes:

and the suffering of the world returns  
like winter's persistent asthma  
year after year.(CP 38-40)

One could see such a practical picture of a victim in his favourite poem "Hunger". This poem deals with young girl, who takes to prostitution to stave off hunger. In this poem, the fisherman-father, being a victim of poverty, pitilessly allows his fifteen-year-old daughter to resort to prostitution:

I heard him say: my daughter, she's just turned fifteen  
Feel her. I'll be back soon; your bus leaves at nine.  
The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wile.  
Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.  
She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,  
The other one, the fish slithering, turning inside. (CP 16-21)

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The fisherman-father finds no other means to earn his source of revenue. By giving this practical imagery, Mahapatra does not create any emotion or passion in us; instead, he makes us shame such kinds of women in society. Niranjan Mohanty comments of these lines: "... the poet has expressed many things: the father's exhausted wife as a plea to live against poverty, the daughter's youth, and the easy commerce that corrodes the immaculate veil of relationship" (18).

In "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street", Mahapatra radiantly brings out the nature of man and the modern Indian sex worker. The men quest for communication but they always get frustrated. The nature of the modern whore is skillfully voiced in her emotionless words, "Hurry, will you? Let me go" (17). Mahapatra in "Man of His Nights of Life", gives a parallel picture of a modern Indian harlot as "The plump whore he has just left / has brazenly gone to work on a new customer" (CP 6-7).

In all these poems, though a real treatment is given, Mahapatra makes one see the fact that these modern Indian women are forced to allow this profession of prostitution just for their bellies' sake and, thereby, they place themselves in the hands of the clients. In these three poems, the woman, as Ayyappa Paniker points out, "is passive" and "not an active share in the guilt; she takes to it mechanically, tired and bored, without even professional game. She has little passion and her flesh is only a commercial commodity for the customers like the flesh of the goats slaughtered by the butcher" (45). Along with seduced women and whores, poor women also find place in Mahapatra's poems. Mahapatra himself says, in "The Twenty fifth Anniversary of a Republic, 1975", "The destitutes everywhere are still my sense of guilt". (31) The poem, "In a Night of Rain", from *Life Sign*, is a sensible depiction of the destitute woman in society:

A mist of embarrassed thoughts slowly sweeps  
the dark space at the river's edge  
where our homeless women have put up their huts.(CP 2-4)

The wretched dilemma of the destitute woman with "A ten-year-old" daughter, who has only winter in life, is offered in 'Summer' of *A Rain of Rites* (1976). What "the cold ash of a deserted fire" and "Under the mango tree" seem to symbolise is the loss of her youth and hope in life. It is written:

The home will never  
be hers.  
In a corner of her mind  
a living green mango  
drops softly to earth.(CP 9-13)

With this humanist revelation, Mahapatra's voice of cry is heard in many unanswered questions in poems like 'The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of a Republic', 1975, where he asks, "What is the order of life? The tubercular servant-girl trips over the edge of the present". In another poem "A Country in Life", he asks, "...

## **Exploration of Humanistic Insight in the Poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra**

why do I wear myself out / feeling for the girls who die / before their breasts are swollen with milk” (CP 7-9). His worry for the tubercular girl dying unmarried is found in another poem, entitled “Strike Your Secret Earth”, from *Waiting*:

Forget the frail girl dying  
slowly of tuberculosis  
before the abashed, silken breasts  
have swollen with milk. (CP 19-22)

Mahapatra dwells into the essentials of the Indian philosophy. He has on his back the sorrow of the mankind only. Even if it is not ‘spirituality’, certainly Mahapatra is alive to the fact that human sorrow is mitigated by certain ideals of the spirit and soul such as love, universal brotherhood, treating everybody on equal terms etc. His endeavour even for the holy is for the release of the mankind from unhappiness. But quest seems to be divested of the essential belief that man and god are basically one. The repentant declaration of Jayanta Mahapatra stays true to all human endeavours. One can only harp on an idea, but the experience shows that it can never be deduced to a rational end.

Mahapatra’s poetry has several examples where he denies God. Man always searches for an explanation to the human misery from the physical setting, as his social and political theories prove it. The solutions, he arrives at, are based on man’s experiences in the environment. But, all his solutions give him only temporary joy. He does not even believe that his writing poetry is going to solve the rampant troubles. He cannot give up with it. He continues to perform his responsibility with the hope of striking the right harmony that can assume the unending notes of joy.

Mahapatra’s inner self has been mixed with his childhood and his poems are their result. His poems reveal the poet’s strong liking along with his childhood experiences a lot with the Odisha fairy testimonies, legends, folklore, and the high-quality Indian epics. The poet recollects the spark of feelings of the whispers of solitude that enclose him. His spirit turns heavy at the sight of his mother, now, indistinct in appearance. The poet feels the anguish of his father’s loss in a different manner and mood. Similarly, his contemporary, R. Parthasarathy, in his poem, ‘Obituary’, presents an equal predicament in his family and the indistinct look of his mother after his father’s death.

Mahapatra varies in most cases and recalls his strong touching affection and friendly relationship with his father. He imprints his high gratitude for his father as he recollects in one of his poems. He recollects of his father as a teetotaler and vegetarian and who takes bath twice a day: once at daybreak, second time before his night obeisance to Lord Shiva in the temple.

In the present study, we find that Mahapatra builds up his poetry on a variety of themes. But his main anxiety has been a discovery of self and its relationship

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with his land, environment, culture, myths, and history. His poetry, in general, bears his unique individuality: first, as an Oriya and then as an Indian. Jayanta Mahapatra has created an Indian English idiom and has effectively acclimatised English Language to an indigenous culture. His poetry is redolent of a native fragrance enriched by a sense of history, culture, myths, and legends. As a poet, the credit of Jayanta Mahapatra lies in the fact that in spite of an unhappy childhood, friendless youth, and unfavourable environment, he has never allowed his feelings of isolation and separation to make an inroad into his poetry. On the other hand, his poetry is by and large an attempt to triumph over such feelings thrust upon him by situation beyond his control. Nayak, by probing his poetry, says that he is out and out an Oriya, groomed and rooted in Oriya culture. Mahapatra has conquered alienation. Above all, Mahapatra's poetry is a triumph over his alienated self and an emphatic certification of his individuality as an Oriya and as an Indian.

So, Indian poetry, without bar, reflects on humanistic concerns and Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry devoutly obliges the mood. The method of his poetry disallows any light; for, it is deprived of a sense of order and meaning in life. It is all a result of the academic disorder set off by clash of various theories mutually hostile, despite aiming at building a world free of all evils.

Finally, Jayanta Mahapatra examines every occasion with the humanistic eye, not allowing his classical learning or his knowledge in myths and legends to colour his outlook. His evolution, as a poet, is accompanied by a ceaseless spirit of questioning aimed only at making a stable advance towards truth. He considers options not only in the present but also in the past in all its different shapes such as history, myth, rite, ritual, traditions, superstitions, beliefs, religious and other social practices, etc. The 'present' realism repels him into the obviously cool haven of the past. It also is as smooth and wonderful as the mountains lying far off. The past too was not unknown to cruelties, gun smoke, shouldering flesh, groans and cries of the people. The survival in the present is similarly a painful journey through the thick jungles ridden with never-ending stones and much pressure.

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**Basudhara Roy**

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## **Interview with Poet R.K. Singh**

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**BR:** Sir, you have had an illustrious career as an academician and poet, spanning more than four decades. Could you please offer a summary of your career for our readers?

**RKS:** I am born, raised and educated in Varanasi. The free spirit of the city still flows in my blood. After completing my post-graduation from BHU in 1972, I left my home to work in different places such as Pulgaon (Maharashtra), Lucknow, New Delhi, Deothang (East Bhutan), and finally landing in Dhanbad, which became my *karmabhoomi* for four decades. Indian School of Mines (now IIT), Dhanbad, even if I didn't like it nor did I expect to stay here for a long time, ultimately gave me my identity both in academics and Indian English Writing: I became 'Dhanbad wale R.K.Singh'—as Lecturer from 1976 to Professor (Higher Academic Grade) till 31 December 2015. I think I am recognized for my contribution to English Language Teaching, especially for Science and Technology, and Indian English Writing, especially for poetry and haiku.

I have published more than 160 research articles, 175 book reviews, and 46 books, including 20 collections of poems. I am anthologized in over 190 books and my poems have been translated into Italian, French, Spanish, Romanian, Albanian, Crimean Tatar, Arabic, Farsi, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Irish, Serbian, Croatian, Slovene, Bulgarian, German, Greek, Portuguese, Esperanto, Hindi, Punjabi, Kannada, Tamil, and Bangla.

About 80 critical essays on my poetry have been published by various Indian and foreign scholars. Various critics have reflected on my works in books including *New Indian English Poetry: An Alternative Voice: R.K.Singh* (ed. I.K.Sharma, 2004), *R.K.Singh's Mind And Art: A Symphony of Expressions* (ed. Rajni Singh, 2011), *Critical Perspectives on the Poetry of R.K.Singh*, D.C.Chambial and I.K.Sharma (ed. K.V.Dominic, 2011), *Anger in Contemporary Indian English Poetry* (Vijay Vishal, 2014), and *Sensitivity and Cultural Multiplicity in Recent Indian English Poetry* (VVB Ramarao, 2015). Several books by P C K Prem, R S Tiwary, D C Chambial, C L Khatri, P Raja, G D Barche, Datish Kumar, Vijay Kumar Roy, Gautam Karmakar, and others have also notably discussed my poetry. Almost all my poetic work is available on the internet.

**BR:** What drew you to poetry, among all the varied genres of writing?

**RKS:** Can't say. Poetry writing happened naturally from my boyhood. Initially I started writing in Hindi, with some encouragement in journalistic writing, short stories, and poems here and there, but it gave me no satisfaction. I started writing

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poems in English after passing B.A. It happened when I had opportunities to read a lot and felt that I too could write poems. But it took years to become publishable.

I didn't try any other genre because I had no free time to sit quietly and attempt something else on a sustained basis. Moreover, I had no patience for a long work. A poem would happen anytime, anywhere, from toilet to bedroom and from meeting to classroom. My passion for the genre has survived.

**BR: How do you look at or experience the relationship between poetry and language? How do you feel the language of poetry differs from that of prose?**

**RKS:** We all have something to say, and we say it using words that communicate. If as teachers we practice language as communication, poetry too is communication. As poets we seek to communicate whatever incites us, or moves us to say. Our individual difference lies in saying it, in our *way* of saying, in our style of communicating, in our language form and contexts, in the pragmatics of our poetic communication. We negotiate our shared contexts as well as contextual disparities embedded in our awareness and attitude.

We use language differently in poetry and prose. Poets have a unique verbal pattern, rhythm, and way of making meaning in poetry. The liberty they take with language cannot be taken in prose.

For instance, when we explore our 'self', or reflect on who we are, or what it means to us as men, women or ungendered souls, we become aware of our constant tussle between the outer and the inner, the social and the individual, the public and the private. Sometimes we may have clarity with precision, and sometimes we may be confused with a variety of options. One may raise an issue, or ask a question, but refrain from answering or providing a solution. One may remain ambiguous. I enjoy 'ambiguity' (cf. William Empson) and possibilities of different meanings in my poetic compositions, take liberty with the Standard English, use enjambment, use no punctuations, give no titles, try to sound different from others in my metaphors, thought and style, and try to leave plenty of scope for readers to interpret my poems differently. All that I do in my poems is not permitted in prose, which is logical and linear. The poetic effect is different. The characteristic properties of a poetic thought, its verbal form and value, its sociosemiotic process, and its reading experience is different from what it is in prose.

**BR: You have written a rich volume of poetry in the haiku and tanka forms. Could you throw light on the freedom and limitations associated with these forms?**

**RKS:** I have been fascinated by the richness and diversity of haiku writing ever since I read Ezra Pound's brief poems, or his rendering of the Japanese *hokku*-like image poems, which, as I understood later, is essentially trying to communicate the experience of a moment. Haiku interested me for trying to record the image of the thing outward and objective, and/or its transformation inward and subjective; the

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emotional complex in an instant of time, or what has been called as the experience of the “momentness of a moment” or capturing the ‘aha’ experience. It is emotionally very satisfying and elevating when a three-liner produces an image. If practiced as serious poetry, haiku can help develop ones spirituality.

Tanka is essentially a brief lyric in five lines, an extension of the three-line haiku, if you like. Love is at its core. A good haiku or tanka must be sensuous, without excluding metaphor, allegory, allusion, symbolism, wordplay, pun etc, for the readers to connect.

While in earlier poems I used the haiku and tanka forms as stanzas, in later poems these appear as independent units, complete in themselves, even as I might have tried to thematically put many of them together as haiku and tanka sequences.

In fact, when I was in search of a ‘form’ for my poems, I discovered haiku and tanka nearer my aesthetics. I had already found ‘brevity’, and haiku had also provided ‘texture’ to many of my regular free verse poems. Haiku and tanka suit me because my poetic mood is short-lived, and I prefer to write short personal lyrics, now using short-long-short 3-liners or short-long-short-long-long 5-liners with native content and experience. I emphasize this because the form is now adapted worldwide, according one the freedom to write from within their own personal, social, and cultural contexts rather than the Japanese, American or English contexts that we, as students of Literature are familiar with. Many of my haiku and tanka have Indian contents (‘kigo’ and all that) in typical Indian English (cf. Braj B Kachru on Indian English). The quality of imagination changes.

Now I come to limitations of haiku. One tends to be repetitive and slave to the form in their attempt to produce an excellent verse. In fact compressed verse writing with limited focus may affect their regular poetry practices. While genuine haiku writing may be spiritually elevating, but slowly one may also end up in silence, with a long meditative, or dried-up, imagination. I don’t know if writing haiku too much and too often, besides being self-limiting, could also be self-defeating.

**BR: Much of your poetry revolves around the fate of human relationships in a rapidly changing world. How do you perceive this theme? What other themes would you consider central to your oeuvre?**

**RKS:** As I said earlier, poetry happens to me naturally and conveniently. I don’t write on a particular theme in a planned way. At a given point of time, something may poetically move me and a poem starts taking shape in the mind. What follows is the response to or exposure of social attitudes, morality, hypocrisy that degenerate human relationship. On a positive note, it could also be a celebration of the relationship. I am frank and reveal what others conceal. What matters to me most is honesty to self. In my social vision, love of the self through exploration of physical relationships, concerns and roles, is basic to love of the divine. I suspect my sex

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metaphors have been misunderstood in characterization of my poetry. Nature, love, irony, complexity of urban life, human sufferings, degradation of relationship, growing apathy, degenerating politics, rise of fundamentalism, prejudices, loneliness, inner mindscape, and spiritual search, which is also a search for the 'whole' in quotidian life, are some of the other aspects of my poetry to be explored.

**BR: The popularity of poetry has resurfaced strongly these days. What would you say about the great volumes of poetry one comes across on social media frequently?**

**RKS:** It's good that so many people are now writing and publishing on the social media. Social media as also small journals and magazines play a big role in enriching our literary culture. In fact social media today provide a democratic space for everyone to share their experience. So many people have so much to share, and everyone aspires to be noticed for their expression in words. They all collaborate and contribute to the 21<sup>st</sup> century culture of being free, without any boundaries, control, or censorship.

**BR: Plenty of young people are now showing promise in writing poetry. However, when it comes to getting their work published, they experience disenchantment with poetry at several levels. Could you comment upon the publishing scenario for creative writing in general and for poetry in particular, in our country today?**

**RKS:** Self-publishing, e-publishing, blogs, and e-journals are some of the options available to every aspiring writer. One can go in for these to be visible to readership worldwide. However, with high printing and distribution cost, print publication of poetry scenario has increasingly become disappointing, especially as there are more poets writing than readers willing to buy books. Then, the apathy of literary academia and media is also a serious problem: they hardly promote new voices that have no contacts with the deans of "back-slapping bands," as one of my friends says. Furthermore, the decline in reading and book buying habit is something poets can do little about, except personally trying to promote their traditionally published book, even if 'traditional' publishing without spending one's own hard-earned money is nearly impossible. There are very few responsible editors, publishers and academics with commitment to discovery or promotion of promising poets and writers. This is a major factor for 'continuance' or 'recycling' of research on the 'same' poets and novelists in IWE. Change in attitude, of English teaching faculty and researchers, is necessary for change in publishing scenario.

**BR: What would be your advice to interested, aspiring, and struggling poets?**

**RKS:** I am no one to advise, because every aspiring poet, with practice, can discover their own 'taste', find their own 'voice', write in their own 'style'. They need to be 'themselves' rather than to be like 'others' they read as students. Till they find their own 'rhythm' in keeping with their innate nature, or sensibility, they should keep reading other contemporary poets writing in different parts of the world, if possible,

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in different languages, or translations. Since maturity of creativity takes time, each publishing success should motivate them to do better, rather than to look for recognition. Sooner or later, somebody will notice their excellence, so keep reading and writing.

**BR: What is your opinion of the value of poetry in today's world?**

**RKS:** Reading and writing poetry refines taste, creates awareness, makes one think. It may not change the world we live in or our state of affairs, but it has a subtle impact on our mind, mental nature, or sensitivity. That's why it continues to survive, despite technological revolution, and people everywhere are drawn to it.

**BR: You have published countless books, written in a large variety of forms, on a large number of themes, and wear several feathers in your cap. What do you look upon as the next destination in your journey as a poet?**

**RKS:** Since I have no academic ambition, pressure, or compulsion for research and publication (now that I am retired), I concentrate on promotion of my poetry. I must reach out to a wider audience. Since I have been international in my attitude and values from my early years, I won't like to die as a stranger or a mere Indian, politically speaking, but as a poet belonging to the whole world. With whatever little recognition I have, my last few publications have been a small step towards this high ambition. These include *I Am No Jesus and Other Selected Poems, Tanka and Haiku* (English/Crimean Tatar, Romania, 2014), *Growing Within* (English/Romanian, Romania, 2017), *God Too Awaits Light* (California, 2017), *Tainted With Prayers* (English/Spanish, Colombia, 2019), and *There is No Paradise and Other Selected Poems Tanka and Haiku* (Mauritius, 2019), besides publication of several poems online and in various journals in different languages. I have also made almost all of my published books available on the internet to facilitate wider reading and research. I intend to pursue my poetic career like this, with bilingual publications, and look forward to receiving support from friends and well-wishers. Thank you.

## Suman Shekhar

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Interview

### Suman Shekhar Talks to DC Chambial

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Here is reproduced the text of the interview with Mrs. Suman Shekhar, born at Palampur (Kangra) in a middle class family on 30 September 1962. She received her primary education from the Christian missionary St. Anne Girls High School, which was later taken over by the HP government, and Matriculation from the Govt. Girls High School, Palampur. She has been very candid, unassuming, direct, and straightforward in her replies that the readers can judge for themselves by going through this text.

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**DCC: How was your early childhood spent?**

**SS:** My childhood was spent quite nicely without any worth mentioning difficulty. On important occasions like festivals, and birthdays of we all seven siblings (two brothers and five sisters), mother used to cook 'Halwa' and 'Kheer' etc. We used to sleep on 'Niwar' woven beds and were provided 'Khind' during early onset or near termination of winters and 'Rajaie' or quilt during intense winters. During my 4th standard in 1971, unfortunately, I lost my beloved father. This incident impacted my tender mind to start thinking about life and death and this made me elder and I started remaining silent. At the same time I devoted my time to studies and always stood first in the class. After the school hours, at home, I used to follow a strict time table for my studies and remained awake till late in the night.

**DCC: Any interesting anecdote of your school days?**

**SS:** As regards an anecdote of interest, when I was in 9th standard, I took part in 'drama', play competition, along with co-actor and my friend, Neelam, who is also a writer now. Just at the start of this item when I had spoken only a few dialogues I forgot everything about my role. Coping with this situation, I started creating altogether new dialogues to which my co-actor also responded equally favourably. At the close of this item everyone present in the hall applauded unequivocally. Remembering that incident, at times, I think that probably, I had some seeds of creativity in me that had sprouted during the play.

**DCC:** Educational qualifications? Any significant anecdote during your graduation or post-graduation days that throw light on your creativity?

**SS:** As regards my educational qualifications, I passed my B.Sc. (medical) from Government College, Dharamshala. I also post-graduated in B. Ed., MA (English) and M. Ed. I am also a Reiki healer having done Masters in Reiki. Presently, I am also pursuing 'NDDY' course of Naturopathy from Delhi.

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During my final year of graduation in Government College, Dharamshala, one day I saw on the College Notice Board a notice by Dr. Gautam Vyathit, Professor of Hindi for the selection of Editor, Hindi section of the college magazine 'Bhagsu'. I appeared for this test on the scheduled date. To my surprise, I got selected as the Editor even though some of my competitors were students of MA, Hindi.

**DCC: When did you start creative writing?**

**SS:** I started writing at a very early age during my early schooling itself.

**DCC: How were you drawn towards the Muse?**

**SS:** I do not remember correctly and precisely what drew me towards the muse. Everything happened in a natural way. From the school days itself, I used to read the entire newspaper quite seriously, the literary section of it always attracted me the most. Whenever, any thought entered my mind, I cherished to write the same on paper.

**DCC: Who have been your favourite poets in Hindi?**

**SS:** One day, I read Nirala Ji's poem 'Bhikshuk' in my textbook and our teacher explained 'Mukt Chhand' (verse libre in English) to us very passionately. On that night itself, there was a very heavy snowfall at Palampur and I wrote a long poem, 'Himpaat', in 'Mukt Chhand'. Nirala's poetry has had a great impact on me.

**DCC: Which poets have influenced your writings?**

**SS:** Most of the poets, whom I listened to in the meetings of Rachna Sahitya and Kala Manch, have helped me enrich my ideas and thoughts. I am delighted to include in this list the names of Hatty Prim, Baldev Singh Thakur, DC Chambial, Gurmeet Singh Bedi, Hriday Pal Singh and Naresh Kumar Udas.

I cannot exactly say they had any impact on my writings because writing concerns my own feelings and my own reactions. But, what I can say, firmly, is that their writings did inspire me a lot.

**DCC: Which poet, according to you, seems to have left an indelible impact on you as a person and as a poet?**

**SS:** As I went through the poems of Chambial in his anthology of poems, *Broken Images*, I was extremely impressed by his writings. Further, on going through his curriculum vitae available in the same anthology, I, being a graduate in science like him, made up my mind to pursue my post-graduation in English. Thus, I post-graduated in English literature. I always got inspiration from Chambial and have a deep respect for him.

**DCC: When was your first creation published and in which magazine?**

**SS:** My first poem, 'Vah Mein Hi Hoon' (I am She) was published in *Veer Pratap*, in 1976, when I was in 9th class. In 1987, I published my first anthology of poems,



## Suman Shekhar Talks to DC Chambial

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*Muthi Bhar Dhoop (A Handful of Sunshine).*

**DCC: What was your first creation: a poem or a story?**

SS: My first creation was a poem. Though, simultaneously, I started writing short stories, articles, and diary of events, letters, and a novel, in 1976, just at the age of 14, which was published 41 years later in 2017.

**DCC: What do you cherish best: poetry or short stories?**

SS: I cherish writing poetry. But I also enjoy writing stories.

**DCC: As a teacher of English, how do you establish harmony between your hobby and vocation?**

SS: I think when it is one's intense love for two or more divergent things one can manage them somehow. To be honest, it is by writing I get energy to pursue my varied interests.

**DCC: What is the cardinal motive behind your writings?**

SS: Emotional catharsis is at the core of many of my creations: be it my poems or stories. A deep felt need to release the abstract machinations of mind; to let those subjective experiences have a voice of their own through poetry is a calming and fulfilling exercise for me.

**DCC: Who do you write for?**

SS: I write for all and sundry who have interest in literature or the written word. Something in me compels me to write. My feelings and observations are reflected in my writings. Whosoever reads my writings in the present or will read in future, my writings are for all such people.

**DCC: What is the process of creation in your case? Is it spontaneous or deliberate or meditative? Illustrate, please.**

SS: The process of creation, most of the time, is spontaneous; sometimes it is also meditative. Surely, I cannot write deliberately.

**DCC: When do you write?**

SS: Any time, any where. No particular place and time. Only, the stimulus should be there.

**DCC: Ram Kumar Atreya writes: "When an artist clothes his feelings in figurative language and rhyme and carves them on paper then these feelings become 'poem'". However, both are very rare in your poetry. What accounts for this in your poetry?**

SS: I write as I think, as I talk. I do not want to make poetry so much designed and complicated that people (readers) do not even look at the book. Simple words with simple ideas and simple things I like. And so are my writings.

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**DCC: Do you practice foregrounding in your poetry?**

**SS:** It is something that is seamlessly introduced into my compositions; most often without conscious effort than it is by forced contemplation. Certain tones in poems are so starkly unique that they demand their own space and rhythm... and foregrounding those ideas represents them the best.

**DCC: According to you, what is a good poem?**

**SS:** A good poem is good when it touches the hearts of the readers, inspires them to create and some catharsis takes place.

**DCC: Which, according to you, is your best poem written so far?**

**SS:** ‘Kanayadaan and Vivah’, appearing at page 53 of my book ‘Khula Darwaza’ published by Naman Prakashan, New Delhi in 2016, is the one which has attracted large scale support of the audience on different occasions of its recitation against the use of the term ‘Kanayadaan’ during marriage rituals of the daughters in the society.

**DCC: What do you want to highlight or focus in your poetry?**

**SS:** What I see around and feel, I write. So I am only writing my time . . . . The things that are happening around us can be found in my writings. It is always the socio-consciousness.

**DCC: Do you revise your poems after completing in the first attempt? If yes, how often? If not, why not?**

**SS:** I do not revise my poems. Because, when I revise my poem, an altogether new poem is created and that is different from what I had written earlier. So, I do not want to revise.

**DCC: Have you received any assistance/felicitation from HP Art and Culture department supposed to encourage young writers?**

**SS:** I have not received any assistance or felicitation from HP Art and Culture department so far. Though, some of my books have been purchased under bulk purchase scheme that is the only help or assistance whatever you may call that.

**DCC: What is your response to HP Art, Culture and Languages Academy.**

**SS:** I wish to say only that I am writing since my childhood. Any recognition from the Academy of my writing efforts will certainly encourage me to write with manifold enthusiasm.

**DCC: How many books have you written so far? Which book do you like the best and why?**

**SS:** I have written and published 7 collections of poems, 3 collections of short stories and one novel. One of my anthology of poems “Bahut zaroori hai roti” has been

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transcreated by Dr. D.C. Chambial entitled as “Roti: The prime need”.

I like all the books as they are dear to me as my own children. Every piece of my writing is redolent of certain emotions which either I have felt through my own personal experiences or vicariously through another person. As such these emotions are the fuel to my creativity and I wholeheartedly own and like them all.”

**DCC: Do you like your poems be translated/transcreated in English? What difference do you find in your Hindi poems and their English transcreation?**

**SS:** I immensely like my poems be translated and transcreated in English. I am very thankful to you for taking so much trouble in translating/transcreating my poems in English. For this, I will always remain indebted. This is a dream come true. My book ‘Bahut Zaroori hai Roti’ has been transcreated and published as ‘Roti - The Prime Need’. He has transcreated the poems in such a way that it looks like his original work and my poems in Hindi as their translation.

**DCC: Thanks for sparing time for this chat.**

**SS:** Thanks a lot.

Queen Sarkar

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The 'Holy Constitution', Corruption and Liberation  
in R. K. Singh's  
*Tainted with Prayers*

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**Abstract**

*Tainted with Prayers*, by eminent Indian Poet R. K. Singh, embodies the voices of dissent against the stringent subjugation and atrocities inflicted by the political authorities. From taking up the issues of territoriality to marginality, unsparing male ego to the throes of violence and insecurity, Singh's poems speak for the disenfranchised. The collection captures everything from personal experiences to global trauma. Across the expanse of his poetry, R.K. Singh combines the seriousness of issues with a degree of playfulness to acknowledge the dilemmas of the armored self. The poems in this collection invite us to a space of interactive encounter with the self, disclosing the disquieting narratives created by us. Considering the fecundity of his poetic oeuvre, the review essay is an attempt to focus on the political, cultural, stylistic, and aesthetic nuances of Singh's latest collection of poetry titled *Tainted with Prayers*.

**Keywords:** Dissent, Poetry, Translation, Culture, Politics, Identity, Environment

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R.K. Singh has been at the forefront of poetry for well-nigh three decades. Singh has evolved to a state, where his poetry archives the lost imprints of history, captures the hollowness and confusion of the contemporary society and records the acrobatics of the heart in times of terror. In an era where dissent is being termed as illegitimate, where instances of intolerance are more pronounced than ever, where the roots of our existence are questioned, Singh's *Tainted with Prayers* brings a 'New Dawn', "in the mind ageing fears". For readers, the poems are arranged in such a captivating random order that you can pick up any poem and still feel connected. The nuanced and subtle semantic import, aesthetic specifications, the cultural highlights, and the elemental human predicament at the backdrop of the political dissent, acquaints the readers with the distinctive features of the collection titled *Tainted with Prayers*.

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## The 'Holy Constitution', Corruption and Liberation in R. K. Singh's

The concise introduction of the collection, where Singh says that the book is “dedicated to a person who recognizes the real truth and has been working for humanity, now under tremendous stress”, creates the template for the creative dexterity that Singh sews with charisma and splendor.

Intimations of reality pervade Singh's poetry in these unspeakably dark moments. The political conflicts, the voices of dissent, the synthesis of the east and the west, in Singh's *Tainted with Prayers*, force us to spend more time with the poems than we anticipate. It soothes our discomfort, clings to our beliefs, and awakens us to our complacency. The poems here force us to speak out our discontents on the hollowed notions of democracy, throes of violence and uncertainty, and, at the same time, help us in reimagining a syncretic world. Singh's response to the contemporary moments of crisis in *Tainted with Prayers* formulates a unique visual register wrapped with bold expressions. To quote a few lines from the poem 'Dreams of Clay':

there is no beauty  
or holiness left  
in the naked nation:  
the streams flow dark  
and the hinges of doors moan  
politics of corruption

A section of Singh's poetry also condemns the authoritarianism, diluted with injustice and inequality. One of the glaring fears of democracy which gives the elected members an unbridled power to curtail the citizen's right to question or disagree with the government in power is accentuated boldly in this collection. True to his poetic self, Singh expresses his discomfort with his hortatory voice and powerful mode of expression. To quote a few lines from the poem titled 'Gourmet Journey':

To win elections  
they sponsor chaos chanting  
Modi, Modi  
kill tongues that utter dissent  
or oppose foolishness.

Against a background of social turmoil on having an independent thought or disagreement with the elected public representatives, whether in the university campuses or outside 'mandir and masjid' (temple and mosques), amidst the trend of branding the people as 'anti-national', or 'enemy of the country', between the debate on 'love jihad' and women outfits, Singh's poems continue to question the ideological muddle of the state, its shrinking morality, tainted by corruption, and in

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a way empower the readers to be adversarial towards duped narratives. In the poem titled 'Post-Election', Singh keeps his points explicitly. He writes:

They don't hear  
the silent screams of  
millions  
tired of misfortune-  
play games of convenience  
innocent voters  
sordid life-  
nation's destiny  
heaven-fed

There is also a strong and multilayered hue of disagreement and debate on morality and conduct, originality and virtual-reality, culture, tradition, and history that paints the laconic canvas of the poetry collection under consideration. Singh's artistic mind finds potential for poetry everywhere, or to put it differently, every surface of the universe and every emotion invites Singh's inscription. Warning 'between midnight and three', to the rituals 'hiding helplessness / in the luxury of prayers', to paying for 'peace with God through Jesus' to the god's denial of 'weekly offering', Singh's poetry never fails to capture the pure moments of existence.

While Singh's insight to life 'fills up the inner space', his poetry uses impeccable satires to arise action and engagement towards the physical space - the environment! The poems titled "Aftermath", "Neighbors", "Neighbors II", and "Pollution" point out how humans are transforming the natural landscape dramatically, and, thus, posing an irretrievable threat to the ecosystem. To quote the poem 'Neighbors II':

What could be happy  
about New Year's Day  
when they burn plastics  
and filth on the roadside  
make mud or swell smog  
all day and all night  
I suffer restlessness  
count cows in the lane  
or flies in the kitchen  
neighbors love to live with

## The 'Holy Constitution', Corruption and Liberation in R. K. Singh's

Across the expanse of his poetry, R.K. Singh combines the seriousness of issues with a degree of playfulness to acknowledge the dilemmas of the armored self. The poems in this collection invite us to a space of interactive encounter with the self, disclosing the disquieting narratives created by us. To quote a few lines from the poem 'Depression':

if I die today  
it won't matter to any-  
I have no worth  
they all care for themselves  
search nearest in curved space

Given the signs of escalation resulting in global turmoil - rapes, crimes against women, political violence, social media trolling, and appalling outrages, Singh's experiments with direct allusions acquire an urgent saliency. The poems raise questions on the patriarchal code of conduct, which blueprints what a woman can/cannot do. The poet sometimes places himself in the zones of anxiety ("failure to stay focused / and dying desires to do / what I used to do"), burden ("I don't belong: / they curse me for what I'm not,"), trauma ("if I die today / it won't matter to any"), heartbreak ("erase memories / of love's pace,"), and depression ("there's so much ruin inside and around"), which allow the readers to connect with him and at the same time confront these ordeals and breathe in "fresh air".

The collection has also been translated into Spanish by internationally acclaimed poet, writer, and translator Joseph Berolo. Born in Bogota, Columbia, Berolo is known for uniting the poets of the world, and his translations display his art of combining erudition with delicacy, expertly covering a wide range of cultures, practices, and geographies. The founder of the United Nations of Arts, Uniletras, Berolo, magically conjures the multiple voices from across the world. The act of crossing borders, in terms of languages, breathes a new life to a text. In an era of technological advancement, offering a World Wide Web, Berolo's translation of *Tainted with Prayers* allows it to travel widely across time and space by unlocking the potential differences. Transcending the borders of various kinds, the translation allows the national and the international exchange of our culture, history, tradition and our emotions. The last few lines of the introduction, where Berolo hopes for a peaceful world connected by a strong bond of friendship, actually build the bridge of peace and harmony between two cultures through poetry and also brings together the disintegrated communities. To quote Berolo:

May this work be the human and poetic link that unites the poets of Colombia and the entire universe with a strong bond of friendship through creative poetry, enough to illuminate the "surrealist, mythical, and social elements and consciousness emerging policy" of a world immersed in moral and spiritual poverty. I am sure it will

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reside deep within the soul and mind of our readers.

*Tainted with Prayers/Contaminado con Oraciones* perfectly creates contact zones between different cultures, traditions and the citizens of the world.

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**Suresh Chandra Pande**

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**SEGREGATION: Aesthetic Creation far away from  
Segregated Hostilities**

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Sankarsan Parida is not a lesser known poet. His poetic oeuvres have an exclusive and profound impact on familiar readers for an uncommon quality of spontaneity and naturalness. He, therefore, straight away, reminds me of all existing contemporary Indian English Poets contributing today to this genre of literature from every nook and corner of India; even if in their own limited way. I was really deeply shocked when I heard about Parida's sad demise, on May 16, 2016. This emotional juncture instantly overwhelmed me to recall unequivocally a fantastic academic turned into a methodical poet by sheer necessity of time's demand. Heartfelt bereavements and condolences then prompted me to write a minuscule tribute that appeared in POETCRIT, Jan. 2017 issue's 'Response' section. That, for a short time, gave me a little respite and solace. Today while at leisureliness and ease, I accidentally came across *SEGREGATION*, a collection of poems assiduously brought out. It, at once, inspired and forced me to have a go through and examine the contents.

*Segregation's* first edition arrived on literary panorama from P. Lal's Writer's Workshop-Kolkata and the second version that is with me was published by Prakash Book Depot, Bareilly in 2010. It contains 42 alluring poems and is dedicated to 'My Mother'. The 'Foreword' is written affably by M. Q. Khan in order to introduce Parida's creative commitment and lyrical diction to contemporary literary world. In 'Acknowledgement', the poet humbly shows his greater gratitude to many renowned poets/editors from India and abroad. I am really immensely thankful to Parida for remembering me by mailing this noteworthy collection of poems on May 15, 2013. The title poem, "Segregation", appears in the end on page 42. Segregation is opposed to integration and literally means separation or isolation. But, in broader perspective, it is a fine critique on lonesomeness, seclusion, and solitude. That's why the poem in its treatment of theme, topical design, and construct wisely validates the motif behind the title. Although it is composed in laconic and easy, straightforward and uncomplicated conspicuous elegance, yet sadly moves around the ethics of sound and silence, "Perhaps you derive inspiration / from your father the strict principled man / and in a poor grave sleep mute and brave" (42). This theme is further elucidated by using concepts such as—renunciation and alteration. The dynamic play of the world, as the poet asserts, is subjected to decay and dissolution. If change is the law of nature, eternity can only be grasped by being alone. How beautifully the poet avers: "The segregation is definitely a chance / to think of one's own self in loneliness / and all the matters that concerns us" (42).

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The relation between man and nature forms the pet theme in some of Parida's undemanding poems. The beauty and the auspiciousness, detectable in the appearance of outward nature, dexterously co-relate and inter-mingle the interior motifs of human psyche. The exquisiteness of joy, the poet experiences, in the impermanence of seasonal flowering of the world, has an abrupt impact on his inner intuitive mind. It leads him to discover the true nature of his real self. It is an awareness of time and tenor. Herein, the search becomes more intense, and the poet seems obsessed with finite-infinite relationship clearly evident in lines as such: "These flowers / the tiny gleaming pearls / are more powerful, more swift / than scud missiles, patriots / or mirage 2000s" ("And These Days" 1). The physical and the metaphysical, the sensuous and the spiritual further coalesce to gain significance: "Since / the former is created by one / who rules the universe? / and the latter by one / who fails to rule himself" (1). Overall, the innate simplicity of man, the inherent spontaneity in nature, and the unpretentious ways of the world seem to beguile the poet. He appears fondly reveling in tiny awesome wonders of life and trifling mysteries of nature: "The dusk approaches joyfully / with twinkling stars / embracing the footsteps of the day" ("The Call of the Hour" 2).

The same theme gets extension in another poem, where, against the backdrop of nature's sensational uproar, the poet, in reticent diction, painlessly reawakens the growing intolerance and radicalism: "Man goes against man / nation against nation / hatred and violence reign supreme" 2). However, love and faith come simultaneously to rule the roost and divine light dawns to interfere as a rescuer. What matters most, here, is the divine intervention in day-to-day affairs of men and the milieu. Time and again, in grief-stricken moments, the poet visits the river Brahmani: "Very often / I run to its bank / when agony besmeared me / and find a serene meaning / in the waves" ("The River In Spate" 3). The river not only gives him sense and substance but also shapes the structure of dreams and ensuing revelation. Likewise, the passions, the emotions and the mysteries of sensuous love, being inarticulate, lack understanding; often look incomprehensibly involved in misunderstandings, therefore, downright deficient in imparting lasting happiness and obligatory contentment. At the moment, as such, the poet finds the sole succor in watching warily: "the fluttering golden orioles / in the ivy-vine" ("A Stormy Night" 4). These objects of nature further unburden the poet from the weary weight of the world. So also his intent to discover the man steeped in traditions and cultures of the land intensifies in order to realize the omnipresent reality: "And the same echo comes / from the Kali temple, from the Golden temple / from the Meenakshi Sundareswar temple / and from all the temples of God" ("And The Day Dawns" 5).

Contradictions and dualities ingeniously in-built in native ecological habitats meticulously replicate the vows and promises dreamed by living beings to lead a life of peace and pleasure. But alas! All at once appear smashed and spoiled by

## **SEGREGATION: Aesthetic Creation far away from ....**

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despondency and deprivation. Pairs of opposites and contraries take a front position only to depict and display incongruities and glitches. How much profound is the simplicity of the poet: “Beauty fled in agony / and so did peace and her allies. / Nothing worthwhile remained. / Only the dry, helpless stalks / mourned the passing phase / of a despondent and depraved mass” (“A Solemn Vow” 7). Equally deplorable is the plight of the child carried by sea-winds while the parents were celebrating his second birthday: “Two days passed by / ...the policeman reached there / and informed them / that a two year old child named Butti / was found dead” (“It Was Then Evening” 8). This, thus, is the foul-play of nature—its malevolent aspect. But, the poet astutely succeeds in spotlighting the natural calamities, we humans cannot fight off. However, the benevolent side draws quick attention owing to superb and smooth tongued imagery: “The sweet music of the bird / can never come to an end / it touches all times, all climes / and all sorts of vibrations / in the universe” (“And The Bird Perches” 9). How succinctly the poet brings to fore the apparent contradictions of life: “I look back / and find the distant horizon / reflecting life’s jigsaw / and precluding me / from the glimmering line” (“Biluakhai!” 12).

What immediately grips our attention is the form that outlines people and places of historical importance entrenched in thriving cultures and traditions of the terrain. This kind of poetic knack lends to his poems a special stamp of local color peculiar to his Indianness: “Lalitgiri! / The hill of tenderness, serenity and calm! / You are not just a geographical entity / but something far superior in value / saturated in the scintillating designs / of the Boudh Vihar” (“Lalitgiri!” 13). It is a beautiful and aesthetically organized poem which not only echoes the discipline of coexistence but also the art and architecture of the ancient land. Likewise, the Mother Earth poignantly co-mingles human sentiments with sites and sounds of nature: “the sun rose high over the horizon; / the pattering of footsteps / of school children / caused a painful diversion” (“A Painful Diversion” 15). The local color peculiar to poet’s modus operandi is amply visible in human and animal imagery in poems such as “At Pattamundai Bus Stand “ (16). In another poem, “The Leela Madhab” (17), that shines through the hills, the rivers and the mystery of creation culminates in the victory of God, who is love incarnate. Man pitched against this celestial background appears in all his grievances and despondency just to reminiscence and find a breakthrough. How precisely these lines portray the vagueness of existence: “...I wonder / how one thinks of living / when nothing dependable remains. / It is true that life has meaning even though / devoid of all charms and sense of reason” (“With All The Ifs And Buts” 19).

Moreover, the mannerism that lends special charm to the poetry of Parida is his image making faculty. This aspect brings man in close propinquity with nature: “The mountain tops, murmuring brooks, / the cold wind, the orange cloud / danced like jolly children” (“The Autumnal Function” 23). However, his close study and

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keen query of verdant nature transports his readers at once to the realm of English Romantic Poets. Alongside nature, simple portrayal of men and manners gives a unique charm to his poetry. How closely entwined we are to the inseparable forces of nature! The diurnal happenings and the pedestrians performing everyday rituals in the lap of nature seem to form an inevitable arc around the life of common masses. Immensely exciting is to notice the gloomy, dismal and distrustful existence of human beings filled instantly by the recompense and consoling beam of buoyant nature: "Very often in hours of restlessness and aching pain / I rush to the tree / dancing in sunshine and the breeze / and get so much solace to live / With a little more pleasure and patience" ("The Banyan Tree" 27). The nature, the creation of the Almighty, the Supreme Soul, is beautiful, blissful, propitious and all auspicious. But, as it happens in the sudden reversal of human fortune, the destructive chapter opens with calamities and catastrophes of immeasurable kind, we humans cannot readily avoid. The poet, at places, in a simple and straightforward way, intuitively weaves the net of destructive impulses inherent in human/sub-human behavior. Too much impressive indeed is the picturesque image of Golden Oriole that comes to perch on guava twig in front of poet's portico. Subsequently, rushes into bedroom then to top of the ceiling fan, meanwhile the slumbering poet awakens to see the piteous sight: "My cat jumped over my eyes / with the golden oriole in her mouth; / my eyes were scratched, / I was woe-begone" ("Ah! Where Lies The Fault?" 30).

Concurrently, what matters most in Parida's anthology is his unpretentious down-to-earth realism aptly depicted and obviously understandable. It is here that one comes across that aspect of poetry that is called '**subjectivity**'. Skillfully honed lyrical beliefs of the poet contain enough substantiation to delight and muse over aesthetically culled rhythmical designs. At times, this realism is fed by petty and pretty adolescent love: "My twentieth year /... She, a charming girl /... appears in my inward eye / and kisses me / and I lose myself /in throbbing ecstasy" ("And I Lose Myself" 31). This tangible and unambiguous love is at once replaced by the call of the divine. The Lord of the Universe Himself appears in His earthly incarnation on the grand road of Puri: "for the finest stream of human race / flows from Saradhabali to Swargadwar / with the mystic touch / of love, fellow-feeling, compassion / non-violence, pleasure and peace" ("The Car Festival" 32). Equally significant and practically discernible is poet's faith in native gods and goddesses deeply drenched in cultural traditions of Odisha: "The young men and women / breathed the happy air / visited the legendary hills / like Valeri and Mamu-vanaja ..... / It was a marvelous experience / to have a glimpse / of the Goddess with a terrible history" ("17 December" 36). In fact, the whole gamut of Parida's poetry seems packed in multifarious themes and subjects on different branches of learning. Likewise, the poetic form, he experiments with, reveals an excellent array of

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phraseology, expression; and, language that silhouettes his delightful diction. Not only this but also the apt use of alliteration, assonance, simile, metaphor and personification all through this collection of verse is *au fait*.

One more quality of Parida's poetry is that it humbly yet delightfully depicts beauty as truth and appeals to both outward senses and the soul. There is less stress, strain and intellect; so, his poems run smoothly in a free flow of thought lyrically and musically to bemuse his avid readers. How much organically practical, humane and civilized are these lines: "Suddenly a rose dropped off the plant / in which it sprouted / . . . . the plant danced in the breeze as usual / The flower enlisted itself / to the number of the dead and gone. / No living being bothered / Perhaps the flower stopped me / to tell me its grievances / but the breeze blew violently / and carried the flower far away" ("Memory Of A Fading Rose" 37). Herein, we find the poet using images fraught with natural stuff entrenched in human existence. Men from all sections—high or low, poor or rich, big or small, good or bad, ugly or beautiful, native or alien—participate equally, irrespective of history or language in the fair play pre-arranged by the gambit of the great Divine: "Everyone talks of a personal God / Everyone talks of a personal identity / but our identity is one and the same / We are all human beings / created next to God" ("Reminiscences" 38). The whole created matrix is a perpetual struggle for survival beyond all bondage: "Nobody wipes the tear / and there's the lamenting / I don't know / when a full stop comes / in such conditioned existence" ("The Besmearing Debacle" 39). As a matter of fact, the purpose of human-life is to achieve salvation and a preparation for going to what is Beyond. It is that sort of love that the ancient Greeks call '*Ah-Gah-Pay*'. It celebrates the indivisible oneness of all humanity regardless of any distinction of religion, race, gender or nationality.\*

Along with socio-political and national issues, the poet takes this time the life in general to showcase his profound study of human nature: "And he waits / like travelers in odd hours / on the highway. / And at times / consults the astrologers / sitting on the footpath / under the casuarinas plants . . ." ("Wander In Uncertainties" 40). Indeed, the uncertainties of life, pulsating between hope and despair, form the main crux of this poem. No doubt, the subjective aspect of life looms large across many poetic pieces those acquaint his readers with poet's creative faculty, his sensibility and proclivity. However, now and again, we see the poet making forays into international frontiers by crossing national boundaries to moralize the motto, '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*'—the world as a big family—"A world Government has been set up / the constitution has been framed / Love, Fraternity, Peace and Dignity / granted to each individual" ("It Was A Dream" 41).

This collection of poems seems to transform the imperfect mundane world of time and space into a beautiful assimilation of spiritual and transcendental set of notions. The purpose is aesthetic creation to provide inner peace and poise, far

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away from segregated hostilities and vulnerabilities of contemporary world. His is a world of homely hearths, of life and living adjacent to the joys and grievances, beauty and ecstasy, unity and diversity and the plurality of our democratic set up.

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\**The Times Of India* [Dehradun] Saturday, 1 February 2020.

**Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya**

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### **Stranger Than Fiction: An Explication**

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The title of the printed material is 'Stranger than fiction'. Fiction is that which does not take place in real life. That is simple. Quite naturally, fiction is strange unless you read it with a mindset ready to encounter it. But when it is stranger than fiction, a reader is ready to step beyond the limits of probability. Well, everyday newspapers pull us to the facts that surpass the limits of probabilities in all respects. The mother kills a child, the wife kills her husband, the child marries his mother and surely. Sophocles is not outdated. To add to that, the writers often don the role of the blind Tiresias to spread out what evil has befallen our society.

Here, Manas, like Tiresias, observes that Suvendu could not have a sound sleep at night but had an experience which would remain shrouded in mystery forever. What could be the experience? The reader is curious to know that. There is a kind of flashback to set the background that would function as the indicator. Suvendu's wife, Molly, was admitted to a hospital day before yesterday. What happened to her? Was she sick? The answer is no — Suvendu and Molly earlier had a package tour to Rajasthan. Day before yesterday, when they came back in the morning, everything was fine. After lunch, they took rest at noon, visited the local market for some household necessities, but who knew that the situation would turn for the worse at night? It was at the time of dinner that Molly, suddenly, fell senseless. Suvendu rang his friend, Dr. Amulya Roy. An ambulance came and Molly was immediately admitted, under his supervision, in a government hospital. Molly had cerebral haemorrhage. Strange indeed! One, who was perfectly jolly at the dinner table, a second earlier, fell senseless. According to the doctor, she was attacked by sudden cerebral haemorrhage. These are freaks of nature. No prognosis can be done in such cases.

Now she was in ICU. Throughout the night Suvendu and his brother-in-law were awake at home. And, may be, ennui invoked a kind of sleep in both of them that resisted their common sense. Suvendu experienced a strange vision that cannot be described in words. He saw Molly in his room sans eyes. In the words of the author, "a shadow figure could be marked entering the room. Its suspicious movements

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were in sight—stone-blind, groping for something or slithering in its failure to communicate what it wanted to. Nothing was distinct in darkness but it could be guessed that the shadow figure was pointing at its eyesight.

Suwendu woke up, found Saunak — his brother-in-law — sitting by him, staring at something in front; he too was non-plussed. What did Saunak see? When two persons espy the same bodiless apparition, it seems to be true. Caesar’s ghost was seen by two persons; call it real? Or, call it a fantasy. It was strange that Molly fell at the dinner table sans any prior warning or symptom. It was doubly strange to find Molly at a place where she was not: she was in the ICU. But Molly in the vision of both, Suwendu and Saunak, was groping for her eyes. The scene shifts from the phantasmagoric vision to the ICU.

How is the patient? Dead. But where are her eyes? The rodents in the hospital scooped her eyes. The nurse mildly replied—”But Sir, we are all scared of the big rats playing havoc every night. Despite several complaints and reminders, the hospital authority has not yet taken any action. Hence, you can’t blame me alone, Sir.”

The present reader wonders whether the modern civilization is lying in a hospital at the mercy of the rodents!

The story reminds us that Mrs. Radcliffe and Horace Walpole are not outdated.

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**Twishampati De**

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## **Protest and Reaction – the Pathological Remedies in the Plays of Osborne**

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### **Abstract**

John Osborne's plays gained popularity among the audience because his plays aim to find out the concern of the playwright over the frustration of the society through analysing the Social and Personal aspects. His heroes serve as a role-model to depict the lied frustration, especially, in the youngsters at that time. The issues of his heroes have been shifted from social to personal or present both these elements. The protagonists of his plays are presented as angry young men who become the victims of their own disillusionment and despair. His autobiographical experiences serve as a personal protest. On the other hand, the course of the plays depicts a transformation of social into personal. Social protest also figures in J.B. Priestley's article, "What is Wrong in Britain Today". He writes: "We know vaguely that we are no longer top dogs in the world, but apart from that we don't know what kind of dogs we are. We are in danger of turning into a *faceless nation*" (5). In fact, Osborne's plays are reactions in the form of protest against social chaos. They protest but what they finally get is frustration. Still they do not rest, they protest because they know that there lies the solution to maladies.

**Key words:** Protest, reaction, chaos, frustration

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Every age has its clamorous elements. Even Christ himself became a protester against social hypocrisy. In the plays of John Osborne, the men and women grumble against the state politics, social change and the ways of people. The Osborne characters, especially the heroes, are disgruntled and sarcastic in their interpersonal and social behaviour. They are under a tense frustration at things happening around them. Osborne characters are great intellectuals; they are educated, intelligent and responsive souls. They are clearly in search of meaningful relationship with society. When their quest fails they protest. However, their protest never goes beyond the individual level of a mass movement or rebellion.

*Look Back in Anger*, as a play, shook not only the English Theatre but also the English society by storm and sensation. The play was a fertile ground for highlighting the predicament of the contemporary English Society in the Post-War scenario with a kind of honesty that could be challenged only by it. Jimmy porter, the protagonist of the play, was considered as the spokesman, a cult figure for the youth of Post-War generation who raised alarms against chaos around to find everything futile.

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The end of the Second World War indicated the end of an era in the history of Great Britain as well. The Labour Party was given their vote for power in 1945. There were celebrations, even in India, when the British Soldiers nailed a red flag to the roof of Anand Parbat, in Delhi, precluding the beginning of a new era which introduced a Socialist Paradise. The Labour Government slowly disarmed the British Empire. Great Britain was retired to Little England and the entire energy was turned inwards as the Clement Atlee Government started building up a Welfare Society which was originally centred on nationalisation of utilities. It assured health care, free education, subsidized housing, social insurance, old age pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits, most of which were protected by the newly introduced National Insurance. The Conservative Party in Britain arrived and gained power in 1951 which lasted most of the Post-War reforms of the Labour Party; thus denoting that there was hardly any difference between both the parties and realised that they had no choice as such. John Russel Taylor comments that “the Labour and Conservative Parties in national Politics and in terms of possibility failed to show any concrete direction” (“Introduction” 130).

The Suez Crisis of 1956 reduced Britain’s reputation as a world power. Soviet Union activated the armed race by manufacturing atom bomb and then the hydrogen bomb defying the supremacy of Western nuclear monopoly. The automation in industries led to a regime cutting off workers from their traditional, social moorings.

Another emergency of the new era was the Church of England which could not introduce hope and faith in the people. The open aid of the Bishops of the Church had increased nuclear weapons, especially, at a time when the movement opposed the progressive opinion for peace. The Class-distinction, though marginally lessened during the Labour Government, articulated snobbery; and, middle-class morality also played as deterrent. There was wide spread discontent, depression and disillusionment, all of which not only contributed to but also formed the Climate of opinion in England as observed in 1956.

Jimmy, the hero of *Look Back in Anger*, portrayed himself as a kind of folk-hero for the young generation. Kenneth Tynan comments that he fully manifested all the characteristics of the Post-War youth, “..... the drift towards anarchy, the instinctive leftiness, the automatic rejection of the “official attitudes”, the Surrealistic sense of humour, the casual promiscuity, the sense of lacking a Crusade worth fighting for, and underlying all these, the determination that no one who dies shall go unmourned” (*The Observer* 54). Jimmy, in short, is the very combination of disillusionment and rebelliousness. John Russel Taylor mentions:

*Look Back in Anger* is demonstrately a muddled play—muddled, that is, in what it has to say and the way it says it – but this naturally is only a very minor consideration: a play is about people, not necessarily about ideas, and what matters is not that Jimmy is a most of contradictions (most of us are), but that Osborne has managed to make them into a

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convincing dramatic representation of a complex human being, and one who offered a rallying-point for a number of people from the Post-war generation who felt that the world of today was not threatening then according to their merits. (123)

The main reason for the great impact of the play was the directness of its subject matter. Osborne portrayed his feeling for the contemporary scene, and the temper of Post-War youth, by his consciousness of the contemporary idiom, and his keen satires on aspects ranging from Posh Sunday newspaper and 'white tile' Universities to bishops, hydrogen bomb, class disparities, and middle class morality.

Being a young University graduate with working class background, Jimmy deals in the business of running a sweet stall and is represented as "disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restlessness, importunate full of pride, a combination which organized the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his, makes few friends" (Carter 157-158). He is married to Alison, who also represents her own class. Alison is portrayed as "the most elusive personality to catch in the uneasy polyphony of these three people" (Russell 50). She is viewed as ironing the clothes, which serves as symbolic representation of Manchester life.

Being a play, *Look Back in Anger* can be depicted as an undeniable masterpiece or a feeble period piece; it is without doubt a milestone in the English drama of the twentieth century. Jimmy's role in public sphere becomes complicated by his class, education, and establishment and generation. An aftermath of all these is disarray which engulfs his domestic sphere. Jimmy's difficulty was clearly not unique as many shared their fate along with him; only the thing was that he prefers, unconsciously and unknowingly, to become their grand representative:

Jimmy Porter was talked about as the personification of the thwarted thrashings of a three-quarters educated post-war Briton who has seen a social revolution half take place and his own opportunities economically cut to about a quarter of what he had hoped for. (*Look Back in Anger* 56)

The play not only violated the theatrical conventions by making remarkable use of the contemporary idiom, a language that could awaken people but also by applying a new kind of voice, 'voice of protest' which could arouse the entire post-war generation out of their slumber.

In *The Entertainer*, the Rices are disappointed with their situation; it is apparent in their reactions to their declining surroundings and empty lives. Archie reiterate: "Why should I bother to care; Billy echoes "Things aren't like they used to be; Phoebe retires to a double-featured movie; Frank finishes that nobody cares" (*The Entertainer* 14) and Jean longs for doing something useful at last. The generation is worthless factor; Rice's disappointment has many common qualities, and there is a common root in the source of their alienation.

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One of the factors in Rice's dissatisfaction is that they all, including Archie, desired to gain success at something, and they all fail. Archie wants to gain fame as a performer and fails. Being a star of the music hall, Billy gradually becomes old and his career is over: he has missed a respected profession and repeatedly returns to the past when he was a success. Dreaming of the social position and material success, Phoebe wonders at the Duchess of Porth whose social career she ensues in newspapers; Jean has gained comfortable material future in her engagement to a rising lawyer, but she overlooks a barren life and desires for a different future wherein she will be advantageous to her fellow men. Frank challenges the draft, and, even, has no specified drama; his actions declare that his vision of success is not ascertained in killing. Mick, Archie's other son, gains success in military heroism, but his failure is possibly the most effective one, for he dies in his attempts. The Rices' dreams are modest—a place in the world, some meaningful work to do, and a few human comforts. But for several reasons, they become failure to gain their dreams; time overthrows Billy and Archie in the music-hall; the dimestore and Archie's failure overthrows Phoebe; Jean, like Jimmy porter, is disheartened by the lack of feeling and charity in the world; Mick is deceived by man's inhumanity to man; and Frank is overthrown by prison. **The** Rice has all dreams of success, but whatever their personal dream, each is refuted.

Even though the failure of their dreams of success constitutes moments of disillusionment for them; the Rices, with the expectation of Archie and sometimes Frank, do not become doubtful realists; rather, they insist on thinking that their situation will become better. This romantically optimistic note is in sharp contrast to the naturalistic oppressiveness of their environment and Archie's realism. The Riches struggle with success inspite of their failures to gain it and insist on hoping that they can gain it and it is apparent in their constant references to pulling themselves together. In the same romantic vein, Billy advises Jean to "make something yourself [herself], you're not the rest of us". In the Rices' dissatisfaction with the present and their urge for a different, successful future, and even in their blind optimism, one is reminded of American dream. The Rices' interest for normalcy is also reminiscent of the American dream. From Archie's "Thank God I'm normal" (*The Entertainer* 60) lyric, in his songs to Billy and Jean, on both ends of the age spectrum, "normal" is a household word. Perhaps, they are encouraging themselves, but it is one more example of their romantic escapism.

In *Luther*, a storm of protest is elevated in response to accusation of Pope with Papal **decrimals**, books and documents assigned to the furious flames at the Elster Gate, Wittenberg, 1520. Martin reacts sternly after reading a piece of paper served to him through Cajeton by Pope that if he does not withdraw, he will be excluded from all institutions. Martin is depicted ascending the Pulpit and addressing the gathering. The resentment, the ranting, the tirade, the unobstructed denunciation are all available and Luther reminds of Jimmy Porter, though of course, in a regulated attack.

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The tortured Luther, who appears in the play, is true to the historical Luther, but through Osborne's careful focus and selections, he becomes an extension of legendary public spiritual crisis. The focus of the drama is not upon Luther in the context of history, but upon Luther, the private man; Osborne shapes the hopes and fears, desires and guilts, and above all, the doubts which surround Luther and forced him into his history. Luther, the political and religious leader, emerges only in contexts which enlighten the public man as the offshoot of private pains. Since the inner Luther is portrayed as reality and it becomes the centre of the play, John Gassner's gain-strife that the historical epic, Luther, not characterized, is at once proper observation with negligible complaint. The historical Luther in an epic world scene is not the focus of Osborne; He depicts the psychological reality of a man's spiritual crisis, and he does this by portraying the inner individual, not epic mankind.

Martin disowns even the source of his birth and informs that the mother only he has ever had. Hans interrogates Martin whether it is not mentioned in the Gospels that one shall honour one's father and one's mother and one is formed by the body of a woman and a man and one cannot give shape oneself: Martin is worried at his being regarded and severely interrogates:

Churches, kings and fathers—why do they ask so much, and why do they all of them get so much more than they deserve? (*Luther* 41)

This interrogation, in a way, is a sign of the revolt that Martin protests against the institutions that, he perceives, have unjustifiably and unreasonably got benefited by extracting several things from the individuals. This interrogating mode and framing the audience take a stand by creating pressure on them to think and say "Yes" or "No", "agree" or "disagree", "for" or "against" is actually a Brechtian technique which Osborne has applied. Hans is exasperated for lack of exchange and informs his son that a father earns more than what Martin has given him. Martin contemptuously says:

I've given you! I don't have to give you! I am—that's all I need give you..... All you want is me to justify myself. (*Luther* 41-42)

Martin, thus, does not want to justify his identity as envisaged dearly by his father. He mentions that he is not censuring his father. Only the thing is that he is not agreeable to anyone except God as he alone is the utmost giver. It is, perhaps, this belief that makes him to dispute the Church authorities, as he imagines that it is only God who has the merit of conferring judgement on the people and decide on the questions of providing salvation. The conversation becomes interesting as Hans levies a charge against his son informing him that he is an escapist and is fleeing. He is spoiling his youth with fear and humiliation.

On the contrary, Martin informs that he is opposing problems boldly in a monastery and interrogates his father that it had been so easy in a monastery as per

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the conception of his father, and then there would have been more people in monasteries than outside, thus darting on the fact that it is really those outside who are escapist as they are immersing themselves in mundane things and are unable to realize that it is because people outside the monastery have not surrendered. Hans perceives that Martin was different from all other men. He says, "You were stubborn, you were always stubborn, you've always had to resist, haven't you?" (*Luther* 43).

Their protest against the established dogmas of the society is one of the most valuable themes of Osborne. The idea of his heroes is that they are right and the world around them is wrong. They cannot be right in a world that is hostile and suppresses them with all its faults. Hence, they may be furiously hostile. They protest. This protest is considered as a step to success. The result of the protest is secondary. Whether they succeed or fail, it is a matter of secondary importance. With a keen idea of defining the social and political changes and the growing disbeliefs of the society, the characters of Osborne's Plays can be regarded as highly representative of that time.

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P C K Prem

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**Brief critiques on *Scents and Shadows* and  
*Two Indias and Other Poems*  
Contemporary Anxieties Challenge Intellectual  
Power but Motivate**

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The poets in Ranjana Sharan Sinha and Bhaskaranand Jha Bhaskar mostly touch anxieties of man in existing times, which are testing, uncertain and strenuous but they hold on to the purity of heart and intellect, which seem to provide stimulus to look at life in an optimistic frame of mind. At times, they suggest pragmatic and good quality in man's conduct together with ethical outlook toward man and society so that man enjoys life as a gift of god and with this objective, offer fine lyrics that enrich empty hours with contentment.

Poet's struggle with 'the self' many times pushes him or her to deep deliberations where life despite attainments cannot hold on to the spirit and strength of initial years. One cannot work against time, the most powerful truth. In *Scents and Shadows*, Ranjana Sharan Sinha is truly realistic when age overwhelms and even little sweet memories burden soul and body because age weakens agility of body and strength of mind and heart but still positive thoughts about love continue to grant relief. An ordinary man's experiences amidst mundane worldly chores find eloquent expressions in many lyrics as –

The words –crystallize  
and come out  
in ecstasies of joy and pain!' (2)

Inner fears and uncertainties are products of worldly chaos that disturb a man of intensity in dreams even as it makes him pigmy before the terrible onslaught, a genuine vocalizing of feelings as loss of something very dear haunts. Many a time, simple experiences turn to horrify.

It energizes when nature infuses vigour and, here, the sun turns a symbol of tremendous dynamism when it illuminates the world with "the radiance that pulsates throughout the universe" (21). For many poets, in hour of intense inner itch and anguish nature provides succor because he thinks of the world, men and affairs and finds situation thwarting. Man makes tall claims about the security and protection of women but poet's worry is she is an "Engendered Species", almost "on the verge of extinction". The verse makes scathing comments on society and man's narrow mindset. Socially conscious poet feels upset at hypocritical approach.

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**P C K Prem** (p c katoch of garh-malkher, palampur, himachal, a former academician, civil servant and member himachal public service commission, shimla) an author of more than fifty-five books is a poet, novelist, short story writer, translator and a critic in English and Hindi from Himachal.

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Life for some is a struggle for survival amidst hard work, hunger, exploitation and incessant empathetic expressions as existence turns a burden for many even if a few spots of beauty appear brilliant while religion through roguish hands merely abuses and utilizes an ordinary and defenseless man for selfish motives. Concern for girls and women distresses and one understands the natural tendency of man to take advantage, and so, cause indisputable apprehension, and in the process, reveal ugly face of “man and society” in subtle play of apt words in many verses. Not for a moment, she hurts with harshness of tone and drift but exhibits always woman’s grace and dignity.

She wants, as everyone else, that the fair sex must stand up, confront and defeat man’s hideous objectives. Not only in relations but also in worldly affairs man’s evil-intentioned purpose continues to bring disarray and suffering, bitterness and war and so human beings live in invariably traumatic and uncertain conditions. A man lives in times where peace, love and harmony are fictional (‘No More Wars’ 30) and so the poet extends limits as thoughts of an anarchic world disturb.

Death, destruction,  
Trauma and uncertainties  
Beyond words!  
The earth, oh, God  
is burning!

Love for man and nature is a sacred thought. It ennobles, purifies and grants peace, she often avers as “beauty is deeper than the skin” and to live life in bliss of togetherness elevates even at sixty for love is timeless Valentine’s Day. When one looks at the vast sky, it amazes for the lord’s creation hypnotizes and is a cause of survival. One cannot have glimpses of the lord, and so, for her, mother is the image of god, who looks after affectionately and gives joy of love and security.

However, environmental anxieties disturb, for she thinks how man destroys and kills what nature provides and so he indulges in acts of massive loss to man and property while devastation and disgust engulf. Man is violent and, therefore, brings catastrophic slaughter, a nature conclusion one arrives at as rationale dictates. Loss of beauty and values in life cause extensive distress and so, a man fails to reinvent the real ‘inner self,’ a man’s perennial wish alas!

Many consider Nature and love as refuge to lacerated and distraught hearts. It gives relief to all beings, tainted and sanctimonious for she is the quintessence of god and softly asks man to maintain it for harmony and peace in an age where hostilities, prejudices and intolerance govern psyche of society and therefore, humankind is the victim, she appears to corroborate. She affirms:



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Let us remain  
Closely knit and attached,  
Cascades of love flowing,  
All of us are children  
Of the Mother Earth. ('Cascades of Love')

In an unambiguous mode, she tells man if he thinks properly, man's mother, nature mother and mother earth are the trio where he can definitely seek sanctuary in hour of affliction and crisis, and at this stage, a little different in idiom and style she is.

Socially conscious, she makes ironical but devastating statements on man's acts of destruction and hostility, aggression and diabolic ways of life, and love for the ugliness and spitefulness of life, which man finds assuring and comforting. Forms and faces are prone to untrustworthy style of living, deceit and falsehood and suddenly, the thoughts run to impoverished children, who live in miseries on pavements sans education and comforts. Hunger and deprivation haunt the little uncared brood of shattered dreams as they envision life of joy even as momentary enjoyment a few sweets and chocolates give and then, a sensitive heart utters in delight, "Live, live little girl / A lovely vagrant bird!" (74).

Time and age, the distinct and indeterminate concepts that govern life and permit a few moments to philosophize on life and existence, disturb the poet and at another moment, she speaks fluently about the ego and selfishness of man in 'Man and Tree' (90), a terrible self-destructive outlook despite serious discourse on man, life and nature. Abruptly scenario of a railway platform (93) awakens a perceptive mind to the stark realities of life where hunger, violation of modesty of a girl and exploitation that takes place without compunction and sense of remorse, and, therefore, endlessly the drama continues but man stays stoic and indifferent, one bemoans sans any long-winded beating.

A silent scream rise deep within;  
A scream that could not  
Cut through the night!  
The girl looked helplessly  
at the trains speeding through  
the station to different destinations  
with a whoosh!

To visit past and live in reflective and redolent time, even if short, is lovely distraction for many. Sinha does it beautifully in 'Dead Moments' where she recapitulates life's total experiences, impressions and faces, encounters with men and nature and their beauty, which were source of joy and delight many a time and

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so, she recreates thriving past and she lives in counterfeit present and, therefore, nostalgic reminiscences give meaning to life with a positive message. Thoughts of Gandhi and his eternal message to humankind and then a visit to Banaras ('The Grey Horizon' 110) are emotional outbursts of love that was and still exists somewhere as eyes see.

I feel sad and forlorn in the magic city!  
Cargoes of memories surround me:  
And I'm plunged into the years morphed into past.

Transformative impact of what one observes and sucks up creates a wide spectrum of little feelings, thoughts and excitement. Inner and peripheral influences become causes to the man to breathe through vagaries of life with a mix up of joy and tiny melancholic moments, which provide essence to life, one construes and here, Sinha attracts and impresses with the maturity she owns at this age. A fine experience it is!

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*Two Indias and Other Poems* by Bhaskaranand Jha Bhaskar: If lyrics teach straightway without an overture, these appear strident and droning, for poetry as an art ought to convey substance a little indirectly and still maintain a kind of downright aloofness from the flaws of offering lessons and teachings that tell man how to live life. Bhaskaranand Jha Bhaskar loves to speak up about the realities of life where you confront corrupt and dishonest people and realize that only the wicked men in the crafty system flourish, and the poor and susceptible suffer. He is worried about the ugly scenario politics of the day offers and amidst dissonance and distress, grief and sorrows overwhelm, for in a world of noise, peace is rare. This collection of Bhaskaranand Jha Bhaskar is about the realism of contemporary life of society and humankind – an insightful study a sensitive poet makes.

In 'Two Indias' (22). In 1947, it was the midnight hour/between Aug 14 and 15 – he repeats – she 'India' was portioned into two (23). He is satirical, anguished, cynically worried and philosophically uncertain. What Indians did to themselves after they attained freedom from white people and now, divided despite claim of unity, the two nations appear to live in chaotic unease and uncertainty even as religious extremism surfaces in little fragments to cause discomforts, and that creates awesome situation.

...Are the Indians, born blind  
To their self-sacrifices,  
To the plight of the poor people  
Born deaf to the sad saga  
Of their tragic moans and woes

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In our independent country

English past still haunts the present.

He laments at the lack of understanding of the critical situation and so, the existing putrefaction where the drift is calamitous in spite of the progress, he asserts.

Past haunts because man fails to disconnect it from life irrespective of affirmation, he may make, for unfortunate incidents of communal violence continue infrequently, and terror-stricken people live in an easier said than defined tormented age even as spirit of nationalism strengthens love for the homeland. Still chauvinistic tendencies hurt national truth of universal love, peace and harmony. He recalls faces of mighty men, who had shaped India into a splendid nation, and underlines the lethal disease of religious fanaticism, barbaric acts and belief in false notions and faith. It is difficult to live where men fear and gods prefer to stay away as depravity, mendacity and fabrication govern, and belief in virtues is absent.

He is perceptive, down to earth and loves to portray actuality with candid atrociousness and legitimacy at the risk of inviting bile of many, who love to toe majority-line to escape uneasy living. Faith in culture and Indian heritage appear to infuse thoughts and feelings with strength of expression and ingenuous portrayal of what man observes around because it tends perception of solidity even if he is self-doubting of what he says. Therefore, certain annotations exasperate intellectuals at times, when they speak of politics and politicians – a very unsteady and unpredictable field where truth is often the martyr but he holds on to the thought blueprint, he espouses.

Lyrics invariably try to touch existing life and its predicament even as a man tries to surmount apparent distortions and inadequacies that many a time fall prey to overstatements and symbolic eulogies of truth and reality, which he fails to find around, many lyrics indicate. He thinks Delhi holds panacea for many ailments people suffer from. He makes a plea that it should infuse spiritual strength and ethical spirit so that it cures putrid disquiet besieging men and society. Such hopes and soaring aspirations may give power to the poet but these weaken authenticity and if poets fall victims, it is quite natural. Possibly, he thinks that the city is the centre of India's cultural heritage and Vedic wisdom and knowledge and then, interestingly, he does not forget to remind of "dog culture".

Nothing escapes penetrating eyes one infers from what he tells in many lyrics. Life in totality is the subject where culture, heritage, traditions, politics, democracy, secularism, communal problems, religion, fanaticism, morality, love, women, hunger, poverty, exploitation and host of other teasing issues become the subject of his verses and what he says, has substance and provokes one to think as to what has happened to the society.

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In between, he loves to talk eloquently about Mithila, a part of Darbhanga district and impresses. Obviously, he feels that if man works assiduously towards the attainment of 'Cosmic Balance' (116), it can be a path to ... "the final deliverance of Soul". Therefore, it is time to –

Unite together  
Against the evil forces of nature  
To beat a demonic mind  
In a buffalo-body...

It will take man to the final destination and that is the hope he maintains despite prowling doubts.

He is simple and direct; idiom and metaphors attract and even when he is unforgiving in enlightening truth of life, his expression remains sophisticated. He speaks of cultural grooming with polite style and distinction and that makes verses meaningful, which is precisely his understated power.

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*Review Article*

**Tinh Lang (Silence) by Mai Van Phan  
Explicated by : Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhaya**

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Neither a poet nor a novelist but a critic of eminence, an explicator of prudence, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhaya is embellished with the distinct quality of dwelling in depth on creative literature, specially of Indo-English genre; quite known for his insightful and unbiased critical assessment, he probes into a subject with an inquisitive inclination and explicates the same, stage by stage, so that no veritable point is missed. His academic oeuvre — triple M.A., M. Phil., Ph. D.; his close contact with the common people by virtue of being a ‘soldier of underground literature’ is what makes his analytical approach sound and realistic.

The book, containing forty-five poems, is titled *Tinh Lang* in Vietnamese language, which means *Silence* in English. Born in 1955, Mai Van Phan has penned fifteen poetry books which have so far been translated into twenty four languages all over the world. Recipient of several awards, he is an acclaimed Vietnamese poet.

It is indeed remarkable that the book has been translated simultaneously into English and French from the Vietnamese language. In English, it has been done by Susan Blanshard. Born in Hampshire, England - now settled in Australia - Susan is an ‘English translator-poet for 8 award-winning bilingual poetry books’. Side by side, French rendition of the poems, along with some pictorial illustration, has been done by Dominique De Miscalut, who is an artist and also a filmmaker.

On his part, as an explicator, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhaya makes his standpoint clear on the question of veracity and viability of explication keeping the thought or idea intact while depending upon the translated version of a poem. He writes: “Here it should be noted that there could be no final meaning of a poem. One could write a meaning ( $M_1$ ) of a poem. The meaning could be further interpreted ( $M_2$ ).  $M_2$  could generate  $M_3$ . Thus, the meaning of the meaning of the meaning or the explication of a poem could be explicated over and over again”.

Like music, poetry too has a universal appeal — though it might have been written in a different language and transcreated into English. I use the term ‘transcreated’ only to mean that it is different from just literary translation which hardly gives vent to the idea and/or thought process behind the birth of a poem. Admittedly, meaning of a poem may or can easily vary with its interpretation in more ways than one but here, the interpretation brings us more close to Phan’s conceptualised world of poetry. Undoubtedly, his poems have the force to stimulate our subliminal self and Mr. Mukhopadhaya’s explication makes the poems’ appeal more forceful so that we can revive our conscious mind.

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Let us take some poems at random: Poem number II. The poem begins with the lines “I am a ceramic vase opening its mouth / To the outside world / Inside me a garden is incubating seedlings / Early sunlight soaking / Each plant root”. In explication, it is pointed out that while “a vase speaks of the womb and tomb”, it is presumed that ‘a man thought he might contain in himself the infinite multiverse’. The observation is correct as the ceramic vase is opening its mouth for exposure to the outside world. Moreover, it is affirmed that “In the Buddhist context, the vase stands for the spiritual abundance of Lord Buddha.” Equally correct is the interpretation that inside the vase, to be more specific, the body, there ought to be a garden different from a forest - and it is nothing but a conscious mind. And then, there is a jump cut.

The concluding lines are: “On a riverbank / My feet touch the tide ebbing beneath / On a rising tide / Fish and shrimps just let go / Without swimming / A boat floats with no one paddling / I cannot sit for long / Water tapping on the sides of this boat / Birds calling from high above / Someone knocks hard / On the side of the vase” (236). The poet thinks that the ceramic vase is also a boat — water strikes it, birds call from the sky and a knock is felt on the side of the vase which means “the shell of his ego and ignorance is being hit hard by someone”; quite significantly, in the discussion, we are reminded of Vietnam’s worship of the Sun, as evident from the Dongson bronze drums, and also sunrays — reminding us of the August Heaven of Vietnamese mythology.

The next poem (25) is, as elucidated, about “the extrasensory reality which is neither in the worldly life nor the not worldly”. Let us cast a glance at the poem: “One by one / A flower’s petals fall / Fragrance / Is light and pure / I shut the door tight / Not letting anyone in / Nor slanting sunlight / Nor blowing wind / Where Buddha has just appeared / Within the fleeting space / Between the receptacle and the ground” (287). A flower as a reproductive organ of a plant stands for birth, death, and rebirth cycle. In explication, it is stated: “our multitudinous desires goad us from one life to another, each life undergoing the pangs of birth and death”. Countless petals of desire are shedding but the fragrance lingers. In this fleeting space, we yearn for enlightenment, but it is neither in the receptacle nor on the ground. To justify the point, it is clarified: “Lord Siddhartha Buddha during the very night of enlightenment revisited the countless life stories of his past in the flash of a vision. The only object of the bodhisattvas is to rid the sorrow mickle of the masses weltering in the groans of life”. This is exactly what happens when inner eye opens and the senses look inward to feel that “Buddha mind is everywhere”.

Mai Van Phan’s poems are not only interesting but also absorbing. The book offers different shades of a collage with evocative imagery, view of Vietnamese landscape and the contingent world in versified manifestation of his thoughts and emotions. It speaks a lot of the literary trend and cultural flavour of Vietnam also.

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For instance, in poem number 30, when the poet writes: “A butterfly / Red and lonely / Glides / And flutters / It lands on a tree top / No / It is not lonely”. It is elaborated in explication: “Red in Vietnamese culture means happiness, love, luck, celebration etc”. Similarly, in poem 33, the poet writes: “I serve tea to my father..... / Holding the earthenware cup / my father’s hand dry and rough / Inside my palms”. The imagery of touch is touchy. It also points at “ancestor worship”; since, preparing tea “is an inseparable part of Vietnamese culture. More to it, one could read how poetry is forged in the metaphor of tea making. Thus, here is a poem that holds out a manifesto of poetry”.

Roland Barthes has focussed on two types of writings: readers friendly and writers friendly. The first one offers materials for general readership, may also serve the purpose of entertainment. But the second one, which needs careful study, provides scope for decoding and/or interpretation by the readers so that it is properly understood. No doubt, Mukhopadyaya’s interpretation opens up new avenues in more ways than one to grasp what Mai Van Phan has meant to say in his own way. The delineation of English rendition of Mai Van Phan’s forty-five poems brings us close to a vignette of Vietnam through the portrayal of the *tabula rasa* of mind.

One more example will make it clear. Let us move on to a small but catchy poem, number 41. “I sketch on paper / Thin pencil lines / Downward strokes make leaves / upward ones are flowers.” The pencil lines indicate activities of the phenomenal world which is complete in itself with flowers and leaves. It is an instance of meta-poetry which “hints at the truth of dependent origination, so the flower helps in the pollination whence a fresh plant is born. The mystery of life and existence has seldom been decoded in a simpler way!” It is explicated; thus, we get a different view of life and a delightful literary taste, which are purely of Vietnamese origin. In a word, the poetry of Mai Van Phan, as visualised by proper explication, enriches us with an insight into modern Vietnamese poetry which is sure to cast an impact on our mindset for a long time.

It is worth-mentioning, while exacting an Indian interpretation, Mr. Mukhopadyaya has taken liberty at times to use some anecdotes of Indian origin along with inferences from Indian mythologies and the great Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, to exemplify some of the poems. For instance, while dwelling on the lines: “A spider web is spun / Between two ends of thunder” (Poem No. 12), he refers to Vajrayana or Tantra, and writes: “When the coiled energy travels through the Sushumna nadi or the central channel ranging from perineum upwards and touches certain chakras, there is light. The poet becomes electrified. .... It is the thunder that Moses decoded.” The comparison gives a classical touch to this esoteric poem and, thus, opens all the petals of Mai Van Phan’s poetry spreading the fragrance of unique explication.

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His explication makes each poem perfectly meaningful from different angles as it explores and adds new dimensions to elucidation, which, I think, the poet himself had hardly thought of. Again, Dominique De Miscal, besides rendering it in French language, has illustrated some of the poems. When both, visual and verbal, explications bring out the innermost image of a poem, it goes without saying that 'language manifest(s) in time' and 'painting manifest(s) in space' are dominantly present here. However, to conclude, I would like to cite a French saying – a translation is like a lady, the more beautiful, the more unfaithful. It holds good as far as the efforts of both, the translator from the Vietnamese language and the explicator, are concerned in making the collection more beautiful but faithfully so.

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Sulakshna Sharma

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## The Fire of Hunger

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DC Chambial writes in his note to the readers: “I have made an attempt to translate/transcreate Suman Shekhar’s poems over-brimming with fine poetic sensibility. I don’t claim that I have been very successful, yet I have honestly tried my best” (6). He further mentions in the Introduction: “Suman Shekhar is a very sensitive poet and has been articulating her perceptions of her vicinity, her relations, and above all her heartfelt sympathy for the down-trodden of the society who are helpless that she has very carefully and keenly observed as is apparent in these poems” (7). He continues: Suman is “alive to Nature and its mindless exploitation besides human relations and her quest for the emancipation. Her religiosity is also well expressed. Mysticism is very close to her heart” (8). After perusal, one could not but agree with Chambial.

The book is a collection of seventy-four poems with exquisite themes expressed succinctly and incisively. The poet and the transcreator both are naturals: the work in hand makes the process of creation appear deceptively easy. From the very first poem till the last one, irrespective of the subject matter, a streak of inane, raw emotions and naked truth run unbridled.

The subtle nuances that the poet captures in poems such as ‘Carpet’ (11) and ‘Maa, Rags and Memories’ (13) are authentic and sincere—evoking a waft of earthy fragrance that promises to linger eternally. The poet expresses her love for carpet, thus: “Such a beautiful creation / just to cover the floor!!” (12). While her mention of the “*khinde*” in the latter poem triggers nostalgia of good old days when the number of homemade quilts—“*khinde*”—determined the prestige of a family and the homemaking skills of its women in a Himachali household. The emotions strike a chord in the heart and fingers subconsciously turn pages to read and reread.

Escapism in certain poems unravels a deeper philosophy: ‘Let Me Go...’ (19) to a place calmer and more beautiful than this one. The Utopian dream is tempting:

Let me go  
where there is no sorrow,  
where trickles  
matchless *shanty*.  
Where there moves  
vast sea of *anand*  
let me dive  
into the deeps  
of my soul. (ll.16-24)

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## Sulakshna Sharma

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'Let's Celebrate *Raas*' is another such poem—apparently romance and love is way to escape from “all strifes of mind” (45).

Shekhar's poems on women are both ethereal and genuine. Any Indian woman in particular would relate to them. Consider the poem, 'Not a Machine' (19). The struggle of modern women for true emancipation is axiomatic:

I am not a machine  
.....  
Such a thought is irrational  
I am not your slave.  
I do have desires,  
I do have dreams  
Whenever and wherever  
I'll notice you  
Obstructing my marching ahead,  
I'll protest vehemently,  
Won't bear it silently. (ll.10-18)

On a personal level, 'Baby in a Creche' (37) brought a flicker of tear in my eyes remembering my post-motherhood days:

Every morning the child is unwilling, sad irritated at trifles,  
whimsical.  
Sucks its thumb  
wraps the corner of mother's scarf  
around its finger;  
she pushes him lightly  
or fondly separates  
from herself,  
hurriedly finishes her kitchen chores  
like some machine working swiftly  
no feelings, no love, no courage  
no maternal affection.  
.....  
she reaches office,  
examines files  
and in between  
when she thinks of the child

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something obstructs her throat  
and feels  
lest she is straying away,  
lest she is losing her being. (ll. 16-27; 56-63)

‘After So Many Years...’ (74), ‘Doubtful’ (95), ‘Daring’ (91), ‘A Girl in a Bus’ (50), ‘Tied by Seven Rounds’ (62), ‘There Won’t be Girls...’ (64-65), ‘A Tribute’ (66), ‘A Mishap’ (76), ‘Boy-Girl’ (77), ‘A Young Girl’ (78), ‘Struggle’ (79), ‘Every Evening’ (80), ‘Maa’s Home’ (82), and ‘A Woman Bathing at a Spring’ (85) all are exquisite and impeccable in their own way. ‘In the Courtyard’ (84) brings out the ‘light gender equality’ in ‘so-called’ modern age of educated working women:

A man in the courtyard  
sipping tea  
scans the newspaper  
green grass in the lawn  
warm morning sun  
inside the house  
whistles cooker  
flour being kneaded in a *paraat* [a shallow large metal plate]  
sink full of used utensils  
teases  
mother is busy  
with the children’s  
incomplete home-work  
instructing them  
while moving to and fro  
within the walls  
woman’s fighting  
at many fronts  
.....  
waiting for break-fast  
the man’s dozing. (ll. 1-18; 23-24)

Like a devout Hindu woman, the poet, Suman Shekhar, understands the difference between formal religious worship and true spiritualism. She marvels in the mysteries of God and surrenders before Him. In ‘It is You’ (22), the poet evokes: “O my God! / It is you / who is present / in all” (22). In ‘One Name’, she says, “I write / neither any poem / nor any ditty / nor any Ghazal / I write His name / only ONE Name!” (29).

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The poem, 'A Discovery' (21), deals with soul searching. Meditation and its results is the theme of poems such as 'Shanti' (24) and 'The Mind-Game' (25). The poems reiterate that controlling mind (thoughts) is essential for a meaningful life. In the poem, 'The Sleep' (28), the poem maintains that sleep is interestingly one of the ways to reach the divine. Other such poems are 'Sharad Purnima' (26), 'Come Please' (30), 'Surrender' (36). 'What Did?' (39), 'Let YOU be Glorified' (40), 'Life Cycle' (44), 'God Made the Man' (18), 'A Dream' (54), 'Who do You Try to Find...' (61), 'A Peaceful Naad' (73), 'A Birthday Gift' (75), 'Word' (89), 'Thought' (92), 'Quiet Night' (94) and 'Flew like Clouds' (97).

Love is celebrated in 'The Wait' where a lover, unable to bear separation from her love, tells us: "Daily sitting on a *moodha* [a stool] / at my window/I wait for you....The dry tree will bloom" (27). 'A Love-Letter' (51) and 'At the Close of School' (96) bring out the innocence of sensitive hearts.

Nature in its many hues form the central idea of poems such as 'Sharad Purnima' (26), 'Tsunami' (48-49), 'The Graveyard of Trees' (68), 'Peas' Field' (83), 'Honeybees' (90) and 'The Memory of Kashmir' (100-102).

How time turns the tables on the unfortunate ones and maladies change life is suggested in 'Incurable Disease' (81) and 'Beggar' (46-47). In the latter poem, once a teacher and a poet ends up as a leper who now begs to keep his body and soul together.

The virtues and follies of man become the subject matter of poems such as: 'Closed Today' (99), 'Flats' (93), 'Very Tricky' (87), 'Chat about the Present' (88), 'The Difference' (56-57), 'A Query' (58), 'Standpoint' (20), and 'A Pilgrimage' (59). The parallelism and symbolism drawn between a man and a tree in 'Man and Tree' (23) and 'Trees and Vines' (15) is familiar yet fresh:

Tree-roots sucked from the earth  
And whatever its leaves manufactured  
ate the vine and grew  
at the expense of tree  
and weakened the one  
who supported it. (15)

Then there are poems of despondency and hope—In 'Hope' one is seen fighting the weather: "The cold this year / has broken records / of the past / sixty-and-one years" but the silver lining here is that "there won't be any shortage / of water in summer" (31). The poem, 'Helplessness' (33) brings out the woes of helpless parents in the face of their child's illness.

'The Road Sees' (86) throws the spotlight on the road, often taken for granted, as a constant among variables. 'Insensitive' (41) brings out the difference between

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the privileged and the deprived. Poems such as ‘The Farmers’ (42-43), ‘My Friend’ (71), ‘A Book Fair’ (63), ‘Mystery’ (52-53) and ‘A Façade’ (67) satire hypocrisy and connote the need to restore faith in humanity. In the poem, ‘The Truth’ (69), poet contemplates:

In life too’  
There are beautiful faces,  
sweet words around us  
but who knows  
what have they  
in their heart of hearts? (18-23)

‘*Roti Is Very Essential*’ (102-103) is the last poem in this collection and forms the title of the book:

When hunger  
flames in stomach  
my friend  
I tell the truth  
all principles burn to ashes. (1-5)

It is undeniably true that the fire of hunger devours all hollow values and leaves behind ashes that the civilized wind carries on its back. However, I feel the title of the book, ‘*Roti: The Prime Need (Bahut Zaroori Hai Roti)*’, does not do justice to the whole bouquet of poems. Furthermore, some thought should also have been put into improving the look of the cover page which for now depicts a penury picture of Indian existence—though being a candid reality, which might go well for a newspaper clipping or a political magazine—does not compliment the book in hand that well.

All in all, I adore this book. The simplicity of emotions and the corresponding notions depicted in the poems are so charismatic that when I read a few poems from it (something which I could not stop myself from doing) to my colleagues (who are not associated with English literature in any way) they instantly fell in love with them. So I safely infer that this book is for everyone. Buy it and you would not at all regret your decision, take my word for it. My best wishes to the poet, Suman Shekhar, and the transcreator, D. C. Chambial,—keep creating magic and stay blessed!

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—*a point of view*

## On the Art of Poetry

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Poetry carries restrained praise, a bit of irony and satire, and reluctance of many to share or not to share its joy and here, just ignore smiles and applause. Poems can be straight, complex, and at times, obscure but genuinely try to portray life in multitude of activities of thoughts, emotions and instinctive reactions to persons, relations, incidents and social scenario.

One writes or scribbles a lyric with intensity of intellectual power and emotional reach, is difficult to believe. I understand it as random jotting or, perhaps, faintly arbitrary it is. An adolescent passion it is to connect with the soil and heart or to stay away in fantasy incomprehensible. Today, poets seem to be in a hurry in many cases and so feel convenient in free verse and defy rhythmical rules. I do not think a poem in free verse is precisely a poem, as obviously it is neither rhythmic nor metrical to be true but if the sounds of the words appeal and innate music strikes ears it is a lyric melodic. However, it is spirit of age; a man lives with that is, probably, a little patchy and a bit muddled sans discipline.

If it is about the age, we care for, the poetry or text of it takes birth at this point, and one ascertains linkages with the language, throng of words and meanings. Efforts to sit beside truth in recapturing experiences and little indistinct thoughts words construct, begin. Unease is innate as one tries to travel unsure distance between experiences, thoughts formless, phrase and the final shape words take.

That way I justify what I write. Some verses are serious. A few are light and incongruous but are incisive reflections on man and society. If 'the self' stays out, well, it is good to see around what takes place, what exists and what appears to pester the 'the inside' and 'the outside' of you as body and heart or whatever exists inside. I think poetry is private with an intrinsic desire to participate in societal anxieties and actions where personal reactions and sentiments intercede. Something vague springs up, takes shape and, thus, a few words you call rhythmic appear what one calls image of feelings, a little flowing stream of words – perhaps poetic it is. Thus, passion and its upsurge, call it poetry and it continues; it is only an obsession and, thereafter, a thought to put it out arises.

Poetry as one of the forceful segments of literature looks at life in entirety but is not absolute. It takes upon the responsibility of cultivating and spreading values – ethical and materialistic melodically, I feel, at times, but it raises questions, I do not

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wish to answer for obvious reason. It is inessential that a poet stays as a *guru*, a preceptor, and if it is, he tells lies. Fierce scrutiny of moral principles causes humiliation one does not want. An optical illusion like situation in a desert arises inside where one finds water but is lost in sand dunes but as a guru one must stand up to attest truth so that inner passionate gush gets shape in words. Let the critic start work from here and find actual source of poetic outbursts – a little bizarre, abstruse and still distinct.

As poetic venture moves ahead, it looks messed up as emotions engulf experiences even while distortions arise. It looks odd; for, art, as a teacher, appears disgusting at times, and here, analytical faculties of intellect of vast scholarly field work to protect its region and it is not necessary that you as a poet adhere to what probity wants. Poetry is what hops and soars sans destination like the first cry of a child in a cradle but visualizes a final structure of creative music in words.

Art functions as a purgatory, a conduit that brings about limpidness, wholesomeness, and inviolability even without giving a hint. It is natural and unintended but definitely, it expresses inherent wish to pen down experiences and thoughts even when you, as a poet or an author do not know what precisely you want to convey. If it is the frame of mental region, you want to be true to what you think of man and society it has plausible rationality. Art of continuing real connotation with a strong epithet has definite sources with some elimination. It is precisely a method to get rid of inessentials in what you find awkward and out of context during review or as you refresh or alter word construction.

Notes are good to bring back what you thought once. To give language to emotions and experiences causes tremendous anxiety and uncertainty since articulation of the indefinable shadows vaguely hides the real meaning. Therefore, anonymity is bound to emerge but poetry has its regions of exclusivity and isolation where, many a time, it does not allow any access to an ordinary poetry lover and it is now for the critic to do the rest.

Young age is unconscious of the truth and reality it depicts. It loves to walk into regions new in the hope that it is good to obliterate what exists. Therefore, it reinstates what challenges sensibilities with diffused relation to purported reality.

First, you sit in the right and now, you turn left to locate its bearing on the background. To gain knowledge of truth appears good, but it is stressful. I understand even immature mind raises questions of metaphysical nature he does not know. Later, academicians indulge in the pleasure of imparting it varied meanings touching borders of esoteric interpretations where these meanings do not exist. Here, it turns out phony construal of intellectual prowess or scholarly thrust of not only a lyricist but also the critic. At times, it may be amazing and relevant but many a time, just for the enjoyment of demonstration of one's knowledge, that looks

mostly meta-psychic related, it hints at absent spiritual quests.

Another aspect that requires elucidation is poet's predilection for love of man, society, and humanity, I feel. It infuses spirit of humanism, secularism, and universality, where he functions assiduously toward a future of universal consciousness and unity of minds even as impossibility of realization is understandable and instantly decipherable. However, to tone down such fixation is good for poetry.

Basic nature of human beings never changes; so, the poets normally adhere to the social, cultural, and religious regions of upbringing they inherit through parents, books or scriptural texts. I am not an exception even when I try to create a different space for 'the self'; 'the self' I often try to explore but, sadly enough, fail to arrive at the correct understanding of what it is. However, vagueness and ambiguity stare and it is the poetic mess that persuades to indulge in pleasure of binding fragile structure of words – one, two, or three, called lyrical lines, that give compound meanings. Is it chaotic spirit of the age, where man is in a hurry, I wonder?

At a very later stage, if humanistic thoughts percolate down the psyche, they imbibe invasive thought patterns of wellbeing of everyone irrespective of doctrine, colour or grouping, or region; it is not new but an ancient thought that finds expression in all religions and so in poetry.

**A creative artist** of any genre carries character of age but he does not experience the awesome internal or external burden. Perhaps, feelings of autonomy and innate yearnings of a man may a creative artist stay independent so that a reformist in him functions freely sans restraints on wayward feelings. At that time, liberal approach and its assertion take deep roots within. A cause of immense anxiety and further inquisition it is.

To understand social regions depends upon the quality and degree of knowledge and cultural understanding of a poet's backdrop and comprehension of contemporary times. Subjectivity overwhelms despite extraneous factors that engage poet's empathy for the age with the vibrant help of experience, awareness and quality of life a creative artist lives. He expects better life or hopes that people live a rich and happy life. At this point, an ideal perception of poet is noticeable. It involves challenges and assertion of positive attitude with understanding of environment -good or bad and here, any creative man goes beyond the borders of privacy and thinks of universal situation of life and wears mantle of an ethical man many a time and so, appears good and also disgusting. To teach morality is not good and it is not always welcome but it is an enjoyable poetic endeavour and a tool for entertaining 'the self' with value-system that one hardly adores.

I believe feelings of love and love for nature are elementary basics for human



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aspirations. As poetic sensibility and intensity of experience engulf, cultural proclivity gets strength and it encourages a poet to delve deep into areas of history, religion and myths of humanity in diverse regions that stimulate passion and craze to fathom even unvisited locales –that can be philosophical, spiritual and metaphysical.

At this stage, man's energy to know more about man, society and its evolution function as germane curiosity infuses systematic doze of moral principles. It is not easily discernible but carries the temper of times with reflexive vehemence and enthusiasm.

During its early years, Indian English poetry had its vibrant and dormant spot and here, one can measure the growth with apparent stops, jerks and repositions and now, poets' near aptness in depiction, causes some satisfaction.

It is time of uncertainty in nearly every wing of social spectrum but study of age displays poets' worries, an essential perspective it is, and it is, no doubt, triumph of poets to open up hearts in hard times. If flaws surface, it is natural but the learning appears genuine, for at times, poets work without any frame to depend upon.

If a poet is cynical or wittily ironic, it gives hint of discontent in social setup and reveals awakened consciousness even if the narrative appears not very correct, I not only realized this crystallization but also experienced deeply. If a versifier is a victim to reformatory social and cultural life, it deflates beauty of a lyric. To appear as a reformer or social scientist in poetry may also exhibit disquiet at the fall of values and necessarily it makes an unlikable indentation in poetic charm and so, it is not true poetry. It is '*chalta hai*' type of verse.

To create a lyric out of inner earth 'the self' and define limits of experiences ugly or striking is authentic, for here the architect or artist of verse draws out stuff from within and speaks out what it contains. If he shares what is within, he makes hesitant efforts to become part of men walking outside the social continuum. However, even with disavowal, social set up restricts a creative artist to speak up what he wishes to say. It is not good for poetry, and one is reluctant to call it a tragedy.

Poetry is born as one looks outside on birth and gains impetus as one grows, one may realize or not. I remember days I spent in securing degrees and heard words of principles and morality, of truth and integrity from elders and teachers. It exercised immense influence and I loved good things like anyone else but as I grew, I was apathetic when I observed them in social system. Is it possible to save soul, the inner man? It is big problem. It is good to speak of nature and its beauty, of values and principles but to live purely on them raises questions, notwithstanding what the written word says. Can poetry in such environment, maintain purity of thought and expression? It is for the versifier to find a solution. Expediency tells to

create a distance and live at equidistant. It is a suggestion and every artist has to find his own truth, I feel.

To write has its limitations and poetic frenzy is a little different. You just pick up a pen and begin to scribble lines and as the words come to mind, they form a specific pattern –clear and at times, a little obscure. Experience down deep the heart confronts strains and tensions, for to translate it into structure of a sentence of a few words that appear to flow naturally, is the real problem.

Rhythm or music related to sound softens coarseness words give and here, at times, one tries to find, poetic phrases. However, cadenced or metrical poetic lines for many are not so easy. It requires immense efforts, mental discipline to create music and melody through lexis, an artist realizes, and so it happens with most of the poets when they understand that sensitive expression in blank verse works well. Rhythm and melody require internal poise and equilibrium having source outside I realize and so natural conflict causes barriers in creative process.

If a poet puts stress to bring form to a verse and makes expression pleasant-sounding, tuneful or cadenced, it is extra struggle with the thought and message he wishes to convey I feel but it hampers instant surge of thoughts even if it is modest.

If thoughts and feelings try to touch psychological borders, these give birth to interpretation that carries multiple meanings. To know strength of poetry through mental exercise gives unique pleasure I understand and it is anguish and joy together. One realizes at this moment that realistic comprehension is essential even if inner complexities obstruct.

To me internal maze of thoughts and emotions needs isolation, a kind of insulation from each other to grant it authenticity. It is difficult to find out what actually is true, for emotional and experiential makeup has a thin line of differentiation and therefore, the indistinctness lingers on until a poet tries to arrest it in possibly effective language. In many verses, it works as a restraint. Talking of thought, at times, one is appalled as taste of black blood travels painfully along the Ganges.

Here, in such constructions one fails to convey what precisely one wishes but still the breakup of lines puzzles and reflects some veiled caution.

One wonders if a poet wants to underline intrinsic incongruities or irritations. It hints at a sanctifying process, perhaps as elusiveness assails. Poems also compel one to make a choice between what is obviously existing dilemma and old impulsive urge –good or bad.

A poet's tendency to be ethical and realistic often creates genuine problems where it is unimportant, and therefore, hanging around gives adequate stress. One cannot say what poets really feel when they suffer from irresolution and uncertainty of language they put to use, for the ultimate expression conveys a labyrinth of

## **On the Art of Poetry**

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experience with a few flaws. Even then, it sustains poetic strength and offers moments of pleasure to an insightful poetry enthusiast, I believe.

A creative work apparently looks simple and spontaneous but it requires truth of feelings and thoughts. A poet, a creative artist builds up a certain artistic structure and if he maneuvers inner multiplexes, it is not a genuine art. It is expression of thoughts and emotions with a sense of solemnity and integrity and here the choice is with the artist. If he arranges the choices aptly, it is good but not the best, for truth is an exclusive and instantaneous entity sans disjointed construal, which appears an easy proposition but carries burden of uneasy option with regard to factual understanding.

To take up truth as a subject in lyrics carries limitations because a poet even dilutes the legitimacy and intensity of accepted experiences with the language he uses and the semblance of rhythm he wishes to generate. That is a grave error a poet realizes when he indulges in elegiac joy.

A creative artist deliberates cautiously and discerns a pattern in what he writes I believe. Lyrics, at surface even irritate, inveigle and confound, for he tries to go to the backdrop of formal birth of lyrics and then, understands the hidden meaning and its real face outside.

Very few verses, in this context, I know, I penned down during the last two decades, are not personal in nature it looks. It was neither intended nor deliberate, I understood later. I am still unable to make out. Probably, it was an attempt to hide what I felt for fear of personal infirmities of understanding relations, society and environment I recognized much later. Subjective scrutiny often obstructed correct rationalization. Maybe efforts were not working! However, it was a false perception I knew because at that time, social anxieties born of prejudices and typical cultural abstractions appeared irresistible.

To see the ugly and the unpleasant and make efforts to change it into beauty is a huge crisis. It requires a very strong heart to nurse hopes even while darkness rampant haunts future. To say good words, to smile and to see only light and radiance even in darkness and innate strain, and intolerance and impatience outside, is a good quality but it is also running away from realities and definiteness and that makes a man nincompoop, and perhaps turns him out of shape, and dreary he is I believe.

In creative art, it is good to speak of hopes but to ignore truth and realism often speak of ominous or murky side of life or does not appear pleasant, and at last, it drives man to imperfect knowledge of life and compels him to live in camouflage and illusion. It kills unprejudiced evaluation and thus, imperfections surface to blur correct appreciation. If a creative artist tries to avoid the downside, he is close to truth and makes art somewhat good if not the best.

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## Poems

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### Cameron Hindrum

**Cameron Hindrum** lives and writes in Launceston, Tasmania: the main northern city of Australia's island state. He has published a novel, two plays and two collections of poetry, and until this year he was the Director of the annual Tasmanian Poetry Festival.

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### Lake Poems

*At Lake Yalleena, heading towards Tasmania's east coast*

#### I

You drift against ghost gum calligraphy  
Borne on silence, the twilight  
Hour that lasts all day  
coming in ancient morning  
Standing alone without reflection  
Some measure of eternity  
Sculpts stillness out of sun  
And drifts like bluest smoke  
across placid, passive water  
Into the texture of the trees

#### II

Out of silvered quiet  
morning rises, breaking  
ice-edged surfaces  
into exact pieces,  
Caught before melting...

Comes the canvas of the endless day  
Cast between a frame of trees  
Painted with the joy  
of forgetting time,  
the sky shifting, darkening  
reflected in patchwork mirror,  
braced in breeze and the whisper  
of the long silent country  
Before gunshot and gentry  
Claimed the kingdom of the visible

## Poems

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But now

Serrated duck wings percuss the water  
Making the only violence  
Scattering the perfect surface into  
Fragments of history, which drift towards  
a distant edge,  
never to meet

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### At Storys Creek

Except for the ghosts of houses,  
an abandoned town  
has no memory:  
this is where footprints  
of man and building  
dissolve into gathering ground.  
An absent river, blighted  
within banks of rust  
carries poison-weighted water  
away from the rain off the distant bluff.  
Rain is merciful here: it is not weeping  
for open wounds, lost  
fortunes, or faded lives:  
the pillagers are gone, having reaped  
what they could, leaving  
nothing to sow, or be sown.  
And so the rain bleeds gently  
into a wounded earth  
through piled waste  
And taints itself.  
Below the scars and wounds and waste,  
bad water in a blighted river  
watches the only sky.

<sup>1</sup> An abandoned tin-mining settlement, north-eastern Tasmania

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## Poems

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### Kurt F. Svatek

Professor, poet, critic from Austria, Europe. E-mail: kurt-f-svatek@chello.at

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#### A Summer Night's Dream

It is midnight.  
The full moon has been resting  
for quite a while  
on the sunflowers.

We are standing, hand in hand,  
without saying a word  
and dreaming –  
each for oneself.

For the great decisions of life,  
it seems, must be taken  
in darkness  
and alone,  
without the vain,  
confusing phantasmagoria  
of images and colours.  
Even the moon is a distraction then.

#### SO EASY

Blood-red  
the clouds are suspended  
from the evening sky,  
almost everyday  
at least for a few minutes.

And yet you are  
like a stranger to yourself,

## Poems

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expressing distance instead of affection,  
scepticism instead of friendliness,  
emptiness instead of fulfilment.

After the palms and the pines,  
orange trees are crowding your path.  
And passing by,  
you surreptitiously pluck a fruit.  
Perhaps a beginning.

### **ESTÁ BEM\***

If you run towards them,  
the seagulls fly away  
like dreams,

for they  
hardly lack  
the lightness of being.

Yet one of the stars  
in the early evening sky  
is sparkling with particular brightness.

You feel as if it were watching over you.  
But perhaps this where  
your love is at home now.

\* The Portuguese expression “está bem” signifies “ok”, literally: “it is good”.

### **PIXELS**

The world is not exactly  
as one person  
or another might see it.

## Poems

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It is a photograph  
made up of billions of pixels,  
  
a seemingly orderly  
and yet chaotic mosaic  
of manifold shimmering slivers,  
ground smooth over decades  
or preserving their sharp edges.  
For a long time now, not every  
spring bubbling forth merrily  
from a thicket has been holy,  
and not everyone drinking from it  
will forget the language of violence.

To be precise,  
it is not only the weather-vane  
on the moss-covered roof  
that is turning  
with the wind.

Only the greatest portion of happiness  
is always suspended,  
like a spider's web,  
from just a few easily  
broken threads.

### HAIKU

At the crack of dawn:  
A bird sings,  
and the heart dances

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## Poems

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### Robert Best

E Mail: <Robert.Best23@protonmail.com>

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#### Falling More Slowly

It was relief she'd felt, stepping off the ledge,  
Fourteen floors above the street.  
Years living in misery; hours standing on the edge,  
And now, choosing to die at strangers' feet.

In her mind, where she'd rehearsed this many times,  
She'd seen herself holding a sky-diver position,  
Even adjusting slightly to change her lines  
To avoid killing some innocent other, in a collision.

Instead, she found herself tumbling, spinning, her long skirt –  
The yellow one her sister gave her two birthdays back –  
Binding her legs as one, as she prayed this wouldn't hurt,  
At least, not for long. Not after the first crack.

Then a sudden up-rush of warm air stopped her dizzy spin;  
Arms open, skirt now billowing, she felt almost holy.  
As the thermal took her anger, her sadness, her sin,  
She realised, with a smile, she was falling more slowly.

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## Poems

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### She Followed Him Home

She followed him home  
Through the gathering dusk.  
In a way, she felt sorry for him.  
He had no idea what was coming.  
No idea what karma even looks like  
When your eyes and mouth  
Are full of dirt.

Even as she walked  
The empty streets,  
Keeping him close enough to see  
And far enough so as not to alert him,  
She already knew his house.  
Really knew it.  
Neighbours. Number of windows.  
Alarm system. Lights. Dogs.  
Never let it be said she was sloppy.

I want justice, she thought.  
I want him on his knees.  
I want him fighting for air  
Like a deep-space astronaut  
With a crack in his helmet.

This was her Waterloo.  
Tonight, she was Wellington.  
Tonight, she would crush this  
Jumped-up little Napoleon.  
And tomorrow?  
Tomorrow, she'd go after the others.

\*\*\*

### The Shamanic Poet

Every word is steeped in mystery.  
Every line emerges from the crack  
Between the Worlds.  
Every stanza bears the blessings of Spirit,  
And every verse is layered in meaning.  
Come closer, for there is more to tell!

The ink shapeshifts onto the page,  
From the confines of cartridge  
To carve wisdom onto the  
bark of the world,  
Conjuring memories from the paper  
Of the forest, of which once it was a part,  
And from which it has never truly left.

The Poet writes from Dream,  
from Innocence;  
Not merely a passive channel,  
But as a mischievous herald,  
A passionate creator,  
A bridge between the Worlds,  
Seeking a higher Truth.

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## Poems

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# Ruth Wildes Schuler

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### To a Departed Philosopher

Hovering on that precipice  
mirrored in mists,  
you leave us, Sartre,  
your message being –  
the tree and me  
are one and the same.

In all seriousness,  
you proclaimed that  
the world is created anew  
each day. That's the kind  
of a thing one expects  
an existentialist to say.

And one winter day standing  
in a Paris snow, you would have  
us know that man has  
no nature, only a history  
that can be cast off.

It sounds so simple, Jean Paul,  
but questions bounce off cliffs  
becoming hieroglyphics of bones.  
How does one twist passion and pain  
from the past into phantoms?  
Your philosophy – A gift  
from  
the gods.  
If only we could find the mountain  
where they live.

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## Poems

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### Midnight Vision

Through my window,  
the moon casts down  
steams of evanesce,  
illuminating the night.  
A wolf howls his admiration  
into the empty silence,  
and the poets around  
the world write their poems,  
as the full silver circle  
changes to just a sliver,  
a nomadic wanderer among  
the many star-lit suns.  
It pulls the tides, and sometime crashes  
Mountainous waves to stab  
The rock-filled shores.  
Yet as the moon moves  
upon its repetitive journey,  
it always maintains  
the secret of its dark-side.  
That mystery stirs this poet's  
imagination to once again pen  
another wistful poem tonight.

### Geographical Wandering

I first wandered  
the riverbanks of India  
with Kipling's Kim,  
awed by the holy men  
with their begging bowls,  
the bustling market places,

## Poems

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and the fragrant flowers  
blooming beneath  
a full moon.  
With passing years,  
more books and movies  
showed me horned white-bulls  
wandering freely in crowded streets,  
the fields, ponds, and mountain passes,  
the elephants, tigers, snakes and peacocks  
and Indian boys sleeping  
on their water buffalos.  
In my mind's eye,  
I could see the rickshaws moving  
like the ripples of the Ganges.  
Character is carved  
in the faces of the multitudes  
of this nation.  
They are eternal  
like the monsoon rains  
showering life giving waters  
on this land of ancient  
mysticism and wisdom,  
and high in the Himalayas,  
the Yeti cries with his voice of freedom,  
and I would wish this for all the people –  
Freedom and peace,  
for Rudyard Kipling and I both know  
that India has always been  
more than a word.

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## Poems

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# Suparna Ghosh

Canadian poet of Indian Origin. Email: < suparna@rogers.com >

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## DOTS AND CROSSES

### *Images and Incantations*

#### INTRODUCTION

**MANU:** Manu means “man” in Sanskrit, which represents one of the oldest branches of the family of languages known as Indo-European, extending from India to Western Europe (and, with European expansion, to the New World). Restricted use in the sense “**adult male**” only began to occur in late Old English, around 1000 A.D.

- websites of *South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania* and *Wikipedia*

**f. MANAVI:** Manu’s wife.

- *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon*

**TARA:** In Sanskrit, the name Tara means Star, but she was also called She, Who Brings Forth Life, The Great Compassionate Mother, and The Embodiment of Wisdom, and the Great Protectress....

Goddess Tara is probably the oldest goddess who is still worshipped extensively in modern times. Tara originated as a Hindu goddess, the Mother Creator, representing the eternal life force that fuels all life.

- *website of Goddess Gift*

**TAPAS:** **Tapas** (*tápas*) in Sanskrit means “heat”.

In the yogic tradition, *tapas* may be translated as “essential energy”, referring to a focused effort leading towards bodily purification and spiritual enlightenment. Personified, Tapas appears as the father of *Manyu* in the *Rigveda*.

- *website of Wikipedia*

## Poems

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So may I deduce that relationships are universal?  
Relationships where lust is a must?

Variations in these are cultural and  
Climatic.  
Hot.  
Cold.  
Temperate.

Or, more graphically,  
More accurately,  
Ingrown  
Like toenails  
Because the shoes are tapered and tight  
Or the feet are bound  
Until beautiful and broken  
In the shape of a golden lotus.

Or, crushing,  
Like a corset  
Until the waist fits  
In the palms  
Of a suitor  
Who whisks her away  
Into a brazen sunset.

Or productive,  
In the shape of sons  
Of bronze and brawn  
And daughters  
Liquified like lava.

Manu, for man in Sanskrit.  
Commands one page in description in the *Cologne Digital Sanskrit Lexicon*.

And manavi?  
One line: Wife of manu.

Hence....

**(To be continued in Jan 2021)**

**Note:** For the curious, snippets from a musical CD based on Dots and Crosses,  
can be heard on the poet's website: [suparnaghosh.com](http://suparnaghosh.com)

## Poems

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### Varsha Vijay

Lives in Sweden. Email: <varshavijay22@gmail.com>

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#### Corona's daily dose

A colleague Zooms,  
Skypes and Slacks  
news after news-  
queues of conjectures;  
Hypes data and hacks  
my peace, stacking views.  
I was happy indoors.

Now, hot flashes and hues  
Freaky headache in bouts  
A sudden runny nose  
I puff and sense a microbe,  
in Corona blues!

#### The Virus

Stretcher sliding down!  
The apartment next door  
sees her existence off  
from a distance, mourns.  
No funeral gown  
or hugs forevermore  
She's ousted, whereof  
nothing surrounds

People had left  
and the chapel too  
had gone to rest  
long before she knew  
her last breath

I seal my quivering mouth  
Fear my disposition  
from a neighbouring house.

A lump rises in  
quickly falls, dumbled,  
felling my diadem!  
Sweaty, shaken in chills,  
I mask and mum  
"I am not a victim!"  
in panic mode.

Corona: The constellation  
of greater fears...  
en route!

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## Poems

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### Demure

Tucked into her palms:  
her Face and her Oracle  
in truce between qualms

### A Haiku

Mourning doves  
sing on  
temple domes

### The Willow

[A micro poem]

Standing forth in armors, willed  
unyielding to greed or guilt,  
I am an agony grown afresh  
in every fall or rise,  
when fairly dealt!

### A tanka & a Gogyoshi 5-7-5-7-7: A decoy

Like a tender twig  
on dizzying palm tree top  
freezing in cold arms  
I see my cotyledons  
falling for his monsoon winds!

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## Poems

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### Aju Mukhopadhyay

Poet, Author and Critic. **Contact:** 8, Cheir Lodi Street, Pondicherry-605001,  
**Email:** <ajum24@gmail.com>; 91+9750533168

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Bilingual author of 36 books, Aju Mukhopadhyay, is an award winning poet, author and critic. Published as a world poet, he contributes different genres of literature to various journals. Among other poems, he has contributed Japanese short verses like haiku, haibun, tanka, senryu and of a mixed genre, Ekfrastic, to large numbers of international journals and websites. Some of his haiku are set to music. Of the ten books of poems two are of Japanese short verses: *Short Verse Vast Universe* and *Short Verse Delight*. Besides short stories, he has authored a novel and the second is in process. His works have been widely anthologized and translated in various languages. Besides others, he has recently been awarded, Best Author: Laureate award.

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### Termites Teach

They live in darkness, the white tiny creatures  
With different capacities different features;  
Each group is assigned specialized jobs as they are capable of;  
Workers with limited vision are accurate feeders  
They build and maintain community habitats  
Soldiers with limited vision but strong mandible  
Are fed; they defend, fight and protect  
Queen too is unable to feed herself  
But great that she lays daily thousands of eggs  
Secondary reproductives are substitutes of the Queen  
Queen's formal husband is the titular king.  
Wasps and bees too have the same complex caste system;  
With different capacities by birth different jobs they are assigned  
Rational insects live in harmony with Nature.  
The earth otherwise would have been flooded by termites  
With enormous numbers they would have destroyed our civilization  
Insidiously entering into our lives  
Bu the Queen with her pheromone controls her family population  
keeps the numbers in check;  
By need based use of pheromone she manages perfect birth control.

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## Poems

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With or without sex, she decides her descendants' role.  
Mainly on wood but on grass, dung, horn, and hoof termites feed  
They live on fungus garden too created out of their excreta  
They digest by salivary enzyme, symbiotic fungi, protozoa and bacteria  
Their decomposed **feces** produce lignin, a rare nitrogenous food for them.  
Detritivore, they clean the forest floor, refresh and enrich the soil  
Intricate are the ways of making their mounds for shelter built well  
"Engineers of the Ecosystem" build their home  
Controls the humidity and temperature;  
Porous with sufficient ventilation, termitarium is the model of our sanatorium.  
Man has through biomimicry imitated their superb architecture;  
Varahamihira, ancient Indian savant, mathematician astronomer  
Mentioned that the presence of mounds indicate the water and mineral source.  
Silently they live fulfilling their roles in life as assigned by Nature  
Conserving and fertilizing the earth  
Peacefully they thrive, architect and conservator.  
Poor silent workers do not know human values and propriety  
Not knowing why something is valuable and not the other  
They solve the problem by eating them up altogether.  
Termites live out of sight but those who know eat them aright  
Animals like pangolin know not anything else to eat but termite.  
Cunning man has dug up such simple creatures' home and hearth  
Found out how diligent, disciplined, sincere they are on earth  
To imitate, control or kill them when required.  
Nothing for man is unethical, nothing absurd  
Tiny insects are very insignificant to man  
Man on earth is the supreme being  
But his wishes to defeat and deny Nature may bring his ruin.  
Even a tiny insect teaches him with Nature to properly behave  
So as to help him his face to save.

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## Poems

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Dr. Alexander Raju

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### Life to be Regained

Sending thousands to the Creator,  
The senseless terminator  
Has launched his adamant mission,  
Despite victims' faith or vision.

He walked invisible among crowds,  
His steps unheard in confusion,  
His preys fell down soon under shrouds  
Like maple leaves in Fall season.

The whole nations declared Lockdown,  
Stopped all transport, and closed the town,  
No shops, no banks, no factories,  
The busy world's in a standstill.

It's a world of death and silence,  
Reigned with a feel of indolence,  
A sense of endless vacuity  
Overwhelmed their activity.

All is lost; all is changed by death,  
Only the skeletons are left;  
Shall these bones be covered by flesh  
To see a heaven and earth afresh?

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## Poems

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### Dr. B. C. Dwibedy

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#### Know Not I

How many nights sleep-deprived  
Passed away  
Know not I –  
Why I wept bitterly  
At no man's support,  
My honesty crystal clear  
When got ravished at the dishonest's win;

Why and when I  
Subdued my self  
Facing tribulations  
Knowing full well  
He can take life who has given it;

When I picked up bad habits-  
Pouring milk on stones  
Strangely human shaped  
For a ray of blessings  
Though I know stones do not drink.

Know not I when conscious will  
Turned dormant,  
Allowed wrong things -  
I did not resist  
Why.

Now in the evening  
When I look back  
I am conscious  
I feel -  
Oh! Know not I  
Why I did not -  
At my earlier pleasure days

Resist my self  
To march on mistakes!  
Oh dear! Know thyself and move on -  
Ignorance has no excuse!

#### I Learnt to Live

I walked on woe's bosom  
To search a smile  
On lips around -  
No where did I get;

I swam in tear's ocean  
To taste the sweet glee  
In gay's heart -  
No where did I see;

I waded in the marsh of doubt  
Knee deep to view the heart crystal  
In the chest of happiest guy -  
None did I find except betrayal;

I heard from the heavens  
That the divine descends  
Into thy sense-  
Waiting for that I slept,  
No sense did come but everything left.

Travelling through rocked path  
I learnt -  
To be beautiful see beauty in the ugly;  
To see happiness  
Start with glee in thyself;  
To enjoy divine's descend  
Look up, rise up,  
With divine sense in thy heart, in thy self.

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## Poems

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### Binod Mishra

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#### SANITIZER

Distances that kept you tied to me  
With yearning every moment  
for an embrace, a closure of arms, lied  
all these years for a meaningful event.

Closer you came, far moved the clouds  
of togetherness - a distant dream  
a lurking fear, an invisible intruder  
like a hidden albatross around our neck  
reminding us of our clumsy limbs  
looking for the real sanitizer.

#### An Unwelcome Guest

An unwelcome guest is after all a guest  
sending the host to a chaotic rest,  
putting everyone to an acid test.

An unwelcome guest brings unfound pleasures  
not only of delicacies, but of  
unimaginable leisure

## Poems

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earmarked for a better tomorrow.  
And if he comes empty handed  
The host leaves nothing at rest  
Sending children to rue their fate

Parents at their bidding speed  
stall their diurnals, lest the guest  
turn inimical and spread the virus stealthily  
through his limbs and nose.

Such moments come once in a decade  
allowing everything behind a façade  
awarding the host, a house arrest  
lending meaning to the murmurs of  
the violent play of Nature.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Bipin Patsani

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#### God, a Poetic Image

The most refreshing source of positive energy  
born from the womb of imagination,  
God has ever been a mystery.  
Some see the force as abstract,  
for some it incarnates from time to time since ages.  
My God not flesh and blood is a poetic image.  
My God is a poetic image, the confluence  
of contemplations, dreams and perceptions,  
wherein all come, feel full, meet and merge.

My God is a poetic image, rather a whole poem in itself  
with all its cosmic connotations, transcendental,  
beyond the confines of a cage, the priestly hedge.

Everything visible and invisible,  
my God is my day, my God is my night  
and all that is envisioned  
in the enlightening embers of twilight  
from beginning to the end and all possible beginnings.  
The entire cosmos is there in the eyes of my Lord,  
everything we come across:  
the crescent moon and the cross,  
the calmness of the ocean in meditation,  
the purgatorial fire, storm,  
restlessness and pangs of the creative process,  
*Kaal Chakra* and *Karma*,  
the sense sublime of the compassionate mind  
and all that we love to find where there is *Raj Dharma*.

This amazing poetic image,  
The God of the woods and wonder,  
in its unifying whole uplifts the soul,  
the soul intensely passionate and humble,  
and makes everything beautiful,  
binding us together in its love and divine splendor.

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## Poems

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# Byomkesh Dwivedy

Qtr no .IV/16 BIOP, NMDC quarters, NMDC Kirandul – 494556 (CG);  
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---

### STRUGGLE

Mangled by life's disputes  
Suffering knows no bound;  
Trapped in fate's snout  
I still search a way out.

Wounded with hundred attempts  
Desire still tempts;  
Failure grapples my term, I feel,  
Bullets tearing my skill.

But hope ever persists,  
Smile's not off the lips,  
With courage in heart and head  
Leaving the comfort of bed

I march the way long  
Mumbling victory's song.  
Sweat and tear lead my way  
Win is far away,

Building the dream in shattered stones  
I live in hopes, infinite mourns.  
Eyes forget the sleeps  
I walk with grin on lips,

Nightmare become my end  
Wait and suffering ever my friend,  
To teach me patience  
Work with persistence.

## Poems

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At last smile blossoms on face  
Life glows like sun's rays  
Happiness knows no bound,  
Winner rocks the ground.

### Lost Mankind

Man's lost humanity,  
Suffering tranquility  
See themselves  
In a callous gown  
Printed with anger and frown.

Like a wandering soul  
Lost in hypocrite's loll  
Beauty and goodness  
Lost their way,  
Falsehood and wickedness  
Got their joy.

Life finds a path  
In the hope of love and forward march;  
Yet belief is lost  
With ego's birth,  
Ignorance and betrayal –  
The children of wrath.

Searching the lost innocence  
Gone is all my patience  
In this world of foxes  
Words full of hoaxes-  
Is the common nature;  
Ah! We are proud as God's creature!

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Dr. Dalip Khetarpal

Author, poet, critic. Reviewer, editor, Columnist and short-story writer. Former Director  
Principal, Currently Residing in Ambala, Mobile No. 09215623805;  
Email: <dalipkpal@gmail.com>

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#### **Painfully transient hide and seek**

Our presence is the absence of death  
Death's presence is our absence.  
Nature wills that  
One has to exit if the other enters  
But the two, against all laws  
Of the Divine and Nature, meet today  
As man lives a life-in-death existence.  
Sans witnessing morning and night,  
He is shrouded in the grey evening all his life  
To be finally overtaken by death,  
Ending once for all  
The painful unwelcome childish game  
Of hide and seek.

#### **A Weird Quandary**

As daylight wraps sub-consciousness  
Night unwraps and activates it.  
Man internalizes social norms  
And wraps Id and primitive instincts  
In his psyche  
That never die,  
That keep on surging with uncontrollable gush

## Poems

---

Struggling to rip open the floodgates  
To suppressed and disgruntled instincts and impulses.  
He lives in perennial discomfort  
For he has to be a typical product of society  
Tailored perfectly to fit into it,  
But fitting into it with agony unexpressed.  
It is really inconvenient to be a social man,  
Most painful and inconvenient to be unsocial too.  
Though becomes gradually conditioned to discomfort  
And also starts also loving it,  
Moments of introspection on some peaceful day,  
A realization whether he is a real man  
Dawns on him with cruel agony.

Human life is always in a quandary,  
Marked by suffering,  
Viewed psychologically, philosophically and psycho-dynamically.  
That way, even non-existence becomes preferable to existence,  
But, as life still remains a beautiful temptress,  
'To be or not to be' will continue  
To irk or pique man eternally.

### **Should Man be Transformed into a Machine?**

An untrained mind is riotous, mutinous.  
Trained by strict social tenets,  
Body remains calm, compose, subservient,  
Showcasing outer calm

## Poems

---

Though inner undying storm persists.  
A day arrives  
When psyche gets benumbed  
When powerfully hit by societal tenets powerful,  
For then only mechanical body works  
It works and works, discharges its flesh fast  
Till it becomes a machine, an automaton.  
The change is so fast that  
It defeats the earlier definition  
Called machine-man  
For man has now totally metamorphosed  
Into a machine.  
Now, when one machine  
Interacts with another machine psycho-somatically,  
Machine would proliferate on this little planet.  
Though only natural plants and animals  
Would be the living species,  
Unaffected by mechanization.

Animals and plants would then be superior  
For they breathe, feel and throb  
Unlike machine  
Filling the world  
With life superior.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Dr. H. Tulsi

Founder-Leader: World Renaissance for Classical Poetry. Edits *Metverse Muse*.

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**E-mail:** <metverse\_muse@yahoo.com>

---

### Prosodic Poetry

(‘Rhyme Royal’ Stanzas)

Prosodic Poesy’s tree, under the care  
Of **MM**’s Team, has gained a greater height;  
But scope there is, for it, to better fare.  
By poets all, if reared and raised aright,  
Enhanced can be its height as well as might.  
A mite of manure mixed by each of us  
Can make its soil more salubrious.

If just some moments more we try to spare  
To shield our Poesy-tree from blasting blight,  
Bounteous fruit, much faster it can bear.  
So let’s root out, at once, the tares we sight:  
If left un-weeded, vermin they’ll invite.  
This might prove, to Poesy’s health, hazardous:  
So watchful we should always be, like Argus!

Though Poetics calls for patience rather rare,  
With zest and zeal if pursued is, aright,  
Profits of this pursuit, soon we’ll share.  
Prosodic Poetry offers prospects bright,  
To those of us, assembling at its site.  
To take us to this venue, verdurous,  
There’s ‘**Metverse Muse**’, the chartered *de lux* bus.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### **‘Self-Support’ is the Source of ‘Success’**

By helping ‘selves’, we’ll best obtain our aims:  
Than ‘get in done’, it’s better far ‘to do’, —  
Relying less on others’ hands or brains.

Sans ‘Self-support’, ‘Success’ we can’t woo:  
No ‘Lucky-Dip’ she is, to dip nto!

So, first and foremost, we should ‘do our bit’,  
To gain her grace, to make ourselves more fit.

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[from *Metverse Muse*, Feb. 2020]

## Poems

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### Prof. H. S. Bhatia

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#### A Morsel of Love

The so-called happy-go-lucky world  
is yearning for morsel of love,  
oblivious of the bounteous hamper in hand.  
All round vainglorious braggarts,  
ensconced in their cosy mansions,  
blatantly puff out polluted air over roads  
and places of worship and temples of learning.  
And then they claim hefty rewards  
for the noise they make, and for  
the innocent lambs they fleece to the bone  
in the name of preening and grooming  
for the festive day that never comes.  
Has the lamp the wise lit been switched off,  
and will the all-pervading darkness  
last till eternity with no hope?  
Is it a miracle the world shall change  
if love is brought within easy range  
of everyone, man and beast,  
with obliteration of most and least?  
That's the point reason demands  
where cooperation, friendship commands  
with total loss of differences  
based on iniquitous preferences;  
let them sink to oblivious abyss,  
never to rise or raise their voice.

\*\*\*



## Poems

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### A Prayer To God

I pray to you Lord,  
grant peace to all,  
all those who've lost  
track of you for their blindness  
or self-erected walls.  
Man has buried himself  
in his own crush, and yet  
in his bravado, stakes claim  
to roll away mountains, but not those  
that cover him, erected by himself  
with his proud feats of engineering  
that have entombed his own soul,  
as he moves in the sky, on earth  
and under the sea in search of his self.  
Grant peace to all;  
they're now weary and tired,  
deeply buried with no hope  
of recovery from their self-delusion  
and flashes of illusion of self-discovery  
on some green mountain or hill  
that never there was and does not exist.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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# Hemanta Pramanik

Hemanta Pramanik (b. 1971) is poet and short story writer; widely published in magazines and journals across India. His poems have also been included in poetry anthologies.

**Contact:** Vill. Pakuria, P.O.: Chaltia, Berhampore (WB)-742 165. **E-mail:** <hkp.lit@gmail.com>

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### World Family

Here the white abhors the black  
Same as the fair to the dark,  
Exploiting the poor only the rich  
Makes them wallow in high debt's ditch,  
Below the ceilings many a He  
Clips silently the wings of She.  
Why the ruler wraths over subjects!  
Why class divided as high and low sects!  
Here the highrise spits over slums,  
Unidentifieds rot in training camps,  
The discrimination from different angles  
Anarchy reigns as in the jungles.  
  
Believe in religion which is humanity,  
Bind all earthlings by love and integrity,  
Make so endeared our world family  
Building here heaven with peace and glee.

\*\*\*

### Delving Deeper

Religion so-called before you  
Wrapped with sparkling fringes,  
Explore the inner view  
Be adapted with the changes.  
Whom you search isn't this!  
Knowing self the way so far...  
Pray for His heavenly bliss  
To enjoy life and it's nectar.  
In truth and beauty His presence  
The commoners could not find,  
Delving deeper for pure essence  
Beckons a truth seeker, no blind.  
  
Lessons of love,  
sacrifice and restraintment  
Could lead anyone to enlightenment.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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# Harekrushna Mahanta

Harekrushna Mahanta IWA: Editor, Eternity, Bhubaneswar.

**E-mail:** harekrushnamahanta.eternity@gmail.com; **Phone/** WhatsApp No. 9937692379

---

### Self realisation

Like an oasis in a desert  
spirituality is so sweet  
an essence for mankind  
blended with the splendid  
impact of our age old philosophy  
humility, sincerity and sublimity.  
In spite of onslaught of materialism,  
rush for name and fame  
wealth and affluence  
people adore the significance  
of the inward journey  
through meditation and inner joy  
by self retrospection  
and ascent divine.

Look now at corona restrictions  
Covid 19 sufferings.  
Where gone our science,  
its pride and prejudice..?  
No medicine, no physician;  
but our inner self, its own  
halo, strength and sanctity,  
significance and magnanimity  
can keep us healthy and blissful,  
powerful and joyful.  
Nothing else can, never.

To discover this for ever  
our need is self realisation  
which our saints and sages can  
and we too shall attend  
as this being our true and  
real goal of existence  
for so many births...

\*\*\*

## Poems

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# Jayanta Bhattacharya

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Kolkata – 700103; **Mobile:-** 9073479473; **E-mail:** jayanta.freedom@gmail.com

---

### Do Not Fade Away

Do not fade away  
Still you have enough colours  
by which you can reshape the space  
and paint.  
True, there are blanks all around.  
True, shades are deep-rooted now.  
Do not be afraid.  
You have the power to capture.  
Go on  
with dreams in your eyes  
and colours in your heart.

### Love and Lark

Between love and play  
there is a relay  
that paves the way  
to make godly sway.

Between love and light  
there is a fight  
that demands the right  
to live upright.

Between and dark  
there is a mark  
that allows no ark  
to embark and lark.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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# Jaydeep Sarangi

**Jaydeep Sarangi** is the author of eight poetry collections. He is a renowned critic on Indian Writings and dalit narratives. He is Professor of English and Principal, New Alipore College, Kolkata. **E mail:** jaydeepsarangi@gmail.com

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### Sweet Home

I learn from the door ways  
My friends' names in these  
palsy meetings  
Hazy wires of tenders and budgets.  
Faces before and after new negotiations.

There is a poem  
For each one of them  
All homeward birds  
I follow them close, after the rain.

My hands are dry  
Stones are wet  
Someone is waiting for me  
Near a railway station.

She is learning the alphabets  
Of time, bare face  
Life makes its own home  
After a spell of whistling winds.

\*\*\*

### Elusive Sleep

Only that the ashes are my own  
My birth feeds on them.

My flesh is an open door  
My shadows dance in me.

Year after year, I faithfully wait  
To meet my end, after the river mouth.

With bodies of my ancestors  
Sap of my living. Drowsy lips.

My search for grains  
Ends in a lighted alleyway.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### K. V. Dominic

Dr. K. V. Dominic is retired Professor of English. Prominent contemporary poet, critic, short story writer and editor: GIWEC, IJML.

Email: <prof.kvdominic@gmail.com>

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#### Murder of Nature

Beware Man!  
Mountains, Earth  
Rivers, Seas ...  
Living, vibrant  
energetic like you  
Compared to their  
size and power  
how insignificant you are!  
More you murder  
destroy, exploit  
heavier your burden  
of *Prarabda Karma*  
and *Sanchita Karma*

\*\*\*

#### Had I been Born as a Dove

Patriotism has injected in me  
greatness of my country  
Land which bore great sages and Buddha!  
I boasted of my country to foreign friends

Most inhuman diabolic crimes and  
rapes and murders of angelic children  
seldom heard in other parts of the world  
drown me in ocean of grief and dejection

How can humans become so mean?  
Had I been born as a dove  
I shouldn't have felt so much of pangs

\*\*\*

#### Wastage for the Dead

What happens to human being when s/he dies?  
What happens to animal when it dies?  
What happens to plant when it dies?  
What happens to a flame when it is extinguished?  
Aren't all creations of God?  
Why then man waste thousands for the dead  
when thousands die of hunger every day?

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Dr. K. Rajamouly

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#### Most Welcome Guest

The guest to keep me smile  
And lead my life many a mile  
Most hospitable guest  
Most welcome guest;  
Ever to fall in my inquisitive glance,  
My most propitious chance;  
You are none but a bird of paradise  
In your bliss I recall; those joys I revise;  
All cud dyed by your charms of feathers,  
Echoes your melody-honey to my ears  
My heart leaps so high  
Like a child that loves to try  
To evoke feelings in me all over  
To up-surge emotions to flow a river  
A treasure stored in my tender mind  
As a child's sand-nest built of love-kind;  
Shelley's lark you are,  
Wordsworth's cuckoo on par  
Keats' nightingale more and more  
You are a bird for me so much to pour  
Are gold, all that glitter  
Are sweet, all that matter  
The flower of voice to sweeten  
And of glitz in galore to gladden  
I recall memories, hearing you as a guest  
For my most sensuous fest,  
The cynosure of my lovely eyes;  
To see and listen to your beauty in all highs  
It dwells in my heart-shrine,  
In my inner sense-priests' reign.

\*\*\*

#### See My Smiles

throats' outpour of notes  
in the pretty orchards,  
echoes from hilltops  
my senses nestled in tunes  
words and word-clusters  
to revel the minds  
in the beauty of the themes  
the image on page  
scattered with wounds  
once chiseled with smiles  
all visitors keen on its charms  
no flow of expressions  
the blow of the air  
perfume spread around  
a cordial welcome  
for the sport of my heart  
the flowers in the rainbow  
to glitter in petal-shine  
heavenly seven in the welkin  
painted by brush  
petal-soft feathers  
in touch with lips and cheeks  
in the dimple-dazzle  
in the lush for the joy-flush  
a piece of beauty  
the truth of gaiety forever  
dwells in senses  
memoirs in sonority

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Khirod Malik

E-mail: <khirod.malik@gmail.com>

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#### The Dangling Nest

Parting the curtains a little  
I look out  
and feel the palm of dawnlight  
on my somnolent face.  
The earth seems to move  
under my feet  
as the weaver bird  
peeps from it's dangling nest.  
Unafraid of wind and rain  
and the untold tyrannies of the tropics,  
it looks on  
the changing human world  
as if mocking all our fleeting dreams.  
Slowly my gaze turns inward  
and a silence falls.

\*\*\*

#### My Native Land

Here many voices rise  
and melt in the skies:  
loud welcome to the well born  
and the people in power  
shatter the silence and merge  
into the cries of protesters  
flooding the city squares.  
The homeless run for shelter  
from the fury of Nature  
while the lucky elite  
look out their windows  
and return to their own routine.  
And this is my land  
where sea waves lap the long shoreline  
and snowcapped mountains  
feed the timeless river.

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## Poems

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# Dr. Manas Bakshi

Poet and critic. E-mail: <dr.manasbakshi@gmail.com>

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### Till That Metamorphic Moment

Burning always in human mind  
Some eternal elements  
Of faith and fascination  
As words of secret love  
In twilight lamentation,  
In the music of silence  
Permeating a pyramid's subjugation  
To its timeless stillness !

Like an evening flower  
Inclined towards  
The desolate waxing moon  
Human mind too quite aware  
Of the cover of delicacy  
Concealing the teen-age instinct  
Bashful but sex-prone,  
Lingering on and on  
To be content someday  
With some other elements —  
— Stubborn, Life-borne;

It's burning always — human mind,  
Mired today in self-aggrandizement  
Offers tomorrow prayers for atonement  
If chance be there,  
Realising the silent depletion in  
What so far seemed to be  
The living being's real savings !

A world often we long to  
contemplate  
Has in reality  
More frail than stable elements,  
It's alluring, mesmerizing  
Enwrapping by far our mind  
Only to turn evanescent at once  
As the metamorphic moment  
Just before sundown.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Sediment

If not monotony  
It's but mopiness latent in  
Bothering about  
Whatever remains beneath—

Beneath something  
That was long back  
Cherished or abandoned  
Enjoyed or suffered  
Loved or abhorred  
Gripping life at once  
As an occasional spark in the void.

Sediment of  
Cute longings  
Sacred feelings  
Fake commitments  
Brow - raised bashing  
Faded relations  
Closed chapters  
And yet unfinished games  
Surging long after  
Decades mark the distance  
At an effusive winter evening—  
It rocks

## Poems

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The very aplomb of survival between  
Vaunted idealism and veiled realism,  
Delving into an awesome ambience  
Where feculent remnants imbibe  
That excruciating nostalgic pain  
Of living with splashes of the halcyon past  
Beyond the stark banalities of the present.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Naresh Mandal, M.A.(English)

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Email:<mandal.naresh4@gmail.com>

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#### EMANCIPATION

The dusk, deprived of splendour  
Was being wiped out  
On the bank of Niranjana.  
The sky was studded with  
Thirst and emotions.  
A palm of love and attachment  
Was being filled up  
With fire of eagerness and anxiety.  
Sign of pretence was burning  
While handful of dreams were laughing.  
They were not soundless that day  
In the submission of love.  
Rather the distressed tone was screaming  
For MUKTI, THE RELEASE.  
Release us BUDDHA  
Release us. / We want love  
We do not want this / Affection of tricky ungrateful.  
We do not want pretence  
Release us please / Release us.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Gallery of Cogitation

That day  
Unexpectedly came across  
A beautiful gallery on horizon  
Unblemished.  
Is it made by a sculptor?  
Is it made by an angel?  
No, no. Perhaps not!  
This unseen paint drags me  
Twenty years back, when / My better half was alive.  
She was sitting beside me / In my lawn.  
She was giving company while  
I was hidden in peculiar cogitation.  
That was the source of allurements.  
While I was submerged in  
Impalpable thought.  
But, / Always haunts  
One question in my mind  
Who was the sculptor?  
Any one may be  
May be my better half, may not be.  
May be my beloved, may not be.  
Then, who?  
I am sure, someone has  
Hoodwinked me.  
The one I can never forget.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### O. P. Arora

He has earned PhD from Panjab University and taught in Delhi University for about four decades and has seven books of poems and three novels to his credit. He has been awarded Certificates of Excellence consecutively for two years, 2018 & 2019, by the Poetry Society of India. Some of his poems have also been translated into Spanish and Portuguese. **Contact:** A-2B/193A, Ekta Apts, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi – 110 063. **Email:** arora.omp@gmail.com

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### The Ghost Town

The dream destination  
of the young and the old, fabled fascination  
a village green turned into a lavish imagination...  
Life's mission, a glimpse of the heaven...

Sky-high towers, architecture marvels  
glass houses, mirroring the luxurious royals  
dance and drinks, money, like the Niagra, flows  
arts and music, famed fashion shows...

Like Gatsby's parties, suddenly everything grounded  
not a soul around, even the stray dogs bounded  
shocked and stunned, gaped the entire globe  
fear and wonder blurred, put on the ghostly robe...

Why? Why did it turn into a ghost town?  
Legends, folklore, supernatural stories abound  
Nature's call or some unknown virus, amazing, unsound  
Death roaming with vengeance stink miles around...

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### I Call Them Men

Are you mad?  
Senseless, useless abstractions  
always!

Life after death!  
What is that?

Why not life  
here and now?

So very difficult  
to live this life  
in this world...  
Isn't it enough of a trouble?  
You burden me  
with another life—  
life after death...

How many people live this life well?  
Rare. Great souls.  
I call them men.

Death  
such a welcome relief!  
End of all the troubles  
Fret and fury, meaningless  
bubbles...

The end of the journey  
you reach the goal of life—  
at least one achievement—  
you don't fret about death  
accept it gracefully as it comes  
welcome it with a smile  
who knows how tired it comes...

How many people do that?  
Rare. Great souls.  
I call them men.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### PCK Prem

Poet, critic, Short story writer. Lives at Palampur (HP)- 176 061;

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#### Uneasy Time

an experience weird  
you look around  
death smiles, it jeers  
and you stand to defy

but an uniformed man  
cautions to stay in  
if wandering sans purpose  
confront life  
...and virus and kill it

ask what scares  
people fear and stick out  
necks as strange syndrome  
waits burial

sound of windows  
and soft claps  
and soft tinkling of bells  
tell to go ahead

smiles greet

and he walks out  
as white aprons  
bless future

I sit in the coupé  
send a kiss through  
the glass panel  
she hugs

coffins hustle  
convey unity in space  
and hope and keep spirit  
of togetherness whole.

sounds beam in masks  
filter infection  
and you breathe in life  
and thank gently

pandemic says hello  
and collapses  
as tweeting charms  
and man emits smile and wins.

\*\*\*



## Poems

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### Dr. Ram Sharma

Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, J. V. Collegae, Baraut, Baghpat,  
U.P., INDIA; Email: <dr.ramsharma786@gmail.com>

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#### The Waves of Holy Ganges

The waves of holy Ganges  
are dancing in merriment  
discerning the emptiness of worldly pleasures  
I want to take refuse in merriment  
O ! Ganges  
thou has descended into the suffering souls of millions  
thou has blessed them with purified thoughts and minds  
O! Ganga Maiyya  
thou art life bestower and door to the enlightenment  
O! Ganga Maiyya  
bless us by your divine touch

\*\*\*

#### Happy New Year

Valediction to the parting year  
welcome to the approaching year  
change is the law of life  
behind every era there is labour of ages  
the circle of the creator goes on  
nice playing of the vivacious nature  
blooming of happiness everywhere  
new vows — new zeal — new dreams  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Rajiv Khandelwal,

**Partner:** S.M. International; **Owner:** GR Exports. **Contact:** 22/3, Pandit Motilal Nehru  
Road, Agra – 282 004; email: <rajiv92@gmail.com>

---

#### Creeping Darkness

Some elders have departed long ago  
Younger brother has also left  
One peer left for his heavenly abode today  
The population  
Slowly of the “we care” tribe  
Is shrinking  
Now a days  
No one cares  
For the young are busy in their own lives  
And those near and dear  
Who still carry the burden of “we care”  
Have left  
And live continents apart

I am left with my emptiness  
Slowly learning to live with loneliness

The party-crowd that used to gather around me once  
Has shrunk in age  
And now gather around their peers  
And I silently stand in a corner  
Nursing a drink  
Learning to embrace solitude  
With a no-grumbles, no-complaint air

I now live with diabetes  
Cardiovascular blockages  
Hypertension

## Poems

---

Who stay as permanent house guests in my frame  
And are now coaching me  
As to how to make friends with the disorder  
And live happily  
With people  
Who try to stifle display of their weariness and boredom  
Whenever I happen to vocalize my life encounter  
And sometimes  
When in a melancholic mood  
I wish the creeping darkness advances faster

\*\*\*

### What Happened?

Today  
On waking up  
I thought  
I would write a non fictional poetry  
The kind that recounts reality  
In which flowers sway in joy  
As butterflies flutter around  
Like adolescent school boys  
Outside a girls school  
Fostering incessant thoughts  
Of meeting would be girlfriend  
Somewhat like me  
Thinking of sparkling moments with you  
  
But this day was different  
And now I am in no mood  
To tell you what you did not discover  
And as a poet,  
You think it's my prerogative

## Poems

---

To spin the narrative  
In unusual phrases and metaphor

Am in no mood either  
To humour you  
Through imagery  
And cynical words  
Cause

Now I have to record  
Something that is more crucial  
Than the FATF meeting on Pakistan's status  
And that is  
That this morning  
My wife did not speak to me  
Ignored me completely  
As if we were like chalk and cheese

Ensuing silence had the power of an atom bomb

So, no use asking me today  
About the impending trade war with Malaysia  
For today  
I plan to ask you  
"What the hell happened?"

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Professor R.K. Singh

**Ram Krishna Singh:** retired as professor of English from IIT-ISM, Dhanbad (Jharkhand). Has published over 160 research articles, 175 book reviews and 42 books. His poetry books, *Sense and Silence: Collected Poems (2010)*, *New and Selected Poems, Tanks and Haiku (2012)*, *You Can't Scent Me and Other Poems (2016)*, *God Too Awaits Light (2017)*, *Growing Within (2017)*, *There is No Paradise and Other Selected Poems, Tanka & Haiku (2019)*, and *Tainted with Prayers (2019)*, have been widely read and appreciated and have been translated into several languages of the world. **Email:** <profrksingh@gmail.com>; **More at:** <https://pennyspoetry.fandom.com/wiki/R.K.Singh>.

---

### DREAM

I watch the past crushed  
and fake saints rising to reign  
    exalt cunningness  
    envision deceit to prosper  
    a ram rigs the folk  
with iron teeth and speaking horns  
    from the Ganga's bank  
    immigrant hope and waiting  
    pushes west-, north-, east-  
and southward for net-breaking  
    new resurrection  
beyond the brimming nowhere  
I hear the dead dying  
angels groaning in the trees  
    my unscarred body  
feels the hand that's blade and guard  
    ends me like full-stop.  
New waves of terror rise high.  
    the book is opened  
but where is the seeing eye?

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### AFTERMATH

Between the mossy and thorned pathways  
shadows slant. He trumps the press and praises PM  
wisdom splashed in gonzo arguments  
cocks the walk. Others too feel his sting but prefer  
silence. They know the caged parrot's free  
to shame seven decades of democracy groomed  
differently. They know how weak they are  
to stop the burning forest's ash from reddening  
now aberrations clot in the mind  
await Ram's hanging before the wounded converts  
count the cries, lashes and piercings

\*\*\*

### ROOTLESS

Hidden from the eyes of others  
I was made in secret  
but I can't remember my birth  
  
from foetus in the womb  
to severing of the cord  
erased the memory  
  
now rootless in the valley  
fading sensations of years  
pierce the darkling wings of  
world wide web that blob my being  
twisted and tangled, brushed  
  
away like a fly hate mongers  
hashtag my creation  
pirouetting platitudes

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Ranjana Sharan Sinha

A professor by profession and a poet by passion, Ranjana Sharan Sinha is a well-known voice in Indian poetry in English. Received commendation from the former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam for her poem "Mother Nature" contained in "Spring Zone". She is an author and a critic too. Poems, short stories, articles, and research papers widely published at national and international levels in highly-acclaimed dailies, magazines, e-zines and archives. Recipient of many awards for her contribution to literature. Authored and published 7 books in different genres and 50 research papers. **Contact:** Dr. Ranjana Sharan Sinha: Flat No:101, Pyramid City-1, Mankapur Royal Town, Jaripatka, Nagpur-440041 (Maharashtra). <ranjanasharansinha@gmail.com>

---

#### Broken Accents

Like the ghost in Hamlet,  
many apparitions appear  
in the midnight of injustice  
with their dark stories:  
For them the earth is only a  
meaningless revolving planet!

Images of men—  
Restless within their  
identity by descent:  
Deemed impure,  
less than human  
in our feudal history!

Images of women—  
Victims of traumatic truths,  
violated and torn apart,  
walk with panicked breaths  
and broken accents.

Deflated and defeated with  
the burden of repercussions:  
Birds with broken wings  
surviving the chilly clime  
in the dread of winter!  
Is there hope for a new horizon?

\*\*\*

#### Lost Metaphors

Soft flocculent feelings,  
beautiful yet complex  
with extended metaphors—  
Fly away from the heart's cove:  
Butterflies with fragile limbs,  
eyes compound and magical,  
Create a frantic flutter  
deep within me!

I watch the nymphs  
beating their petal wings  
until they become  
specks on the far horizon!  
Wide spaces become wider  
amid silent sonata of autumn!

Almost frozen in time,  
trapped in space,  
I inch towards a weird  
Organic Automaton!

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Ghazal

Random thoughts enter my mind quite often; I can't tell you why!

The heart conspires to create a puzzle; I can't tell you why!

Mind-pops like a half-forgotten, old song, tease and fascinate—

Tantalizing words seem to leave traces; I can't tell you why!

Mystique in morning — slivers of silver spill out of the sky,

The cadence soothes my soul in pearly air; I can't tell you why!

Waves and sandcastles melting into the sea — saline murmurs!

Feel like walking on a quiet breezy beach; I can't tell you why!

Human life with shadows and bright sunshine — caves and the blue sky!

The lyrics, sometimes, lie in dappled shade; I can't tell you why!

The caravan of life goes by and some rainbow bubbles drop —

Precious like the nuggets of red ruby; I can't tell you why!

\*\*\*



## Poems

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### R. Venkataramana

**Dr R. Venkataramana**, hails from a railway town Guntakal of Andhra Pradesh. He did his Ph.D from Yogi Vemana University, Kadapa, on “Social Criticism in the Poetry of T. V. Reddy and P. Raja”. He has more than two decades of teaching experience. Twenty publications to his credit. Presently working as a professor of English in CMR Engineering College, Hyderabad.  
**Email:** rvenkatabhavani@gmail.com. **Mob:** 9490436276.

---

#### The Clandestine of Hard Work

What is hard work! My mind has been lingering with this notion for a long period;  
I reckoned the fable of La Fontaine “The Ant and The Grasshopper”  
It preaches, “Industry is rewarded and giddiness is punished”  
Is it truly bona fide?  
Is there being no room for the lackadaisical race in this terrene?

Truly, in my perception, undeniably, unsteady minds,  
Do not capable of write their names in the pages of history.  
However, facetiously, these speedy breeding, parade their aspirations  
Are being fragment in the historical records.

How for these factors are appreciated or respected?  
Are these factors conceivable?  
If we scrutinize, life histories of noteworthy personalities of the worldly race,

Gandhiji, Nethaji, Mother Teresa,  
Abraham Lincon, Martin Luther king, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison  
Leo Tolstoy, Tagore, Pele, Tendulkar etc...  
Their secret of accomplishment... is thoroughgoing spirit.

If we too wish ourselves to be the part of history;  
Firstly, haul it our life as a test,  
We may not climb of the sierra but we ought to experience  
How for, resume our journey on the sierra.

People possess with inexhaustible vigour and fortitude,  
Have the competence to compose universe more and more charming and bright.  
All these circumstances, ultimately falls into the reality...  
Only when, people work laboriously...,  
With an unstoppable determination coupled with steadfastness.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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# Sagar Mal Gupta

Retired Prof of English, poet and critic, Email:<guptasag69@gmail.com>

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### NOISEFULNESS

Scared at the constant noisy flow of traffic  
I decided to explore a peaceful house  
in the satellite colonies.  
The name 'Krishna Vihar' attracted me to step in  
but there's no howl, no stir, no exchange of words.  
Death like stillness was quite surprising;  
The whole colony enveloped in mysterious sadness;  
The whole colony was as noise free  
as the leaves are in the windlessness.  
Frightened I preferred to come back  
to the noisefulness of my colony.

\*\*\*

### LONELINESS

My daughter proceeds to her job  
My grandson rushes to his corporate office  
My better half attends her devotional meet.  
Left alone reflecting on the sweet and sour memories.  
Unrecognition attacks; lack of imagination assails me  
Lyrics, odes, sonnets have seem to have deserted me.  
Time ticks very slowly squeezing hard like a python.  
Day has embraced evening, heralding the arrival of  
my daughter and grandson that infuse me  
with a dash of happiness enlivening my body, mind  
and soul.

\*\*\*

## Poems

---

### Migratory Birds

My heart bleeds at the death of  
thousands of migratory birds  
who came to Sambhar Lake.  
They came to escape the coldest weather  
in their countries;  
came for relaxation and warm weather;  
came for procreation and addition to their ilk  
but they met with deadly death.  
A death they never expected  
A death they did not deserve  
A death the cause of which is a mystery  
A death that left a number of  
their brethren wounded  
A death that left a trail of dying birds  
A death that found no rescuers for half-dead birds.  
The saltiest water of Sambhar Lake  
is shedding tears;  
There is grief writ large  
on the whole area of Sambhar Lake.  
Will anybody understand the agony  
of Sambhar Lake/ these birds ?

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### S. A. Hamid

Professor, poet, translator. He lives in Almora, Uttarakhand, and has four books of poems to his credit, the latest being *The Ontology of Desire: New and Selected Poems*.

E-mail: hamidalmora@gmail.com

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### The Worm

Lurking in the deep recesses of my mind  
was a tiny worm that pricked  
the lobes of my brain  
producing shapes and sizes  
beautiful, concrete,  
at times exciting.

But they soon evaporated,  
replaced by abstract concepts  
love, brotherhood, society, God;  
sentiments of lofty souls  
trying to find a place in heaven, mounted  
on the steed of abstinence  
to satisfy eros through *hoors*.

But there were *hoors* all around,  
(the worm again tickled)  
the ones on the silver screen  
in the market place  
on the seaside, mountains, plains  
and, of course,  
the woman next door.

## Poems

---

After a lifetime of conflict  
between the abstract and the concrete,  
the sound of the birds  
the smell of rain on dry earth  
the majestic sight of the hills from my balcony  
the touch of her lips on mine  
the taste of her vagina  
palpable not obscure  
immediate not doubtfully eternal  
clinched the issue.

The worm is gone  
leaving its legacy  
for me to live  
eros mature and refined  
touching the limits of desire  
may be lust,  
not the arid road  
of abstractions  
auto-suggestion,  
not a mirage of Paradise,  
but the real one  
here and now.

\*\*\*

*(Hoors* are said to be beautiful women who will entertain the faithful and righteous Muslim men in their final abode after death, the garden of Paradise)

## Poems

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# Shashikant Kurodi

Asst. Prof. of English, SDM College, Ujire Karnataka.

Email: <shashikantkurodi@gmail.com>

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## Awesome Nature

Mystery it looks always really  
As the Nature at every point appears  
*Wonderful* as usual meaningfully  
To the truthful viewers' *Eyes* and Ears.  
Each year brings from places different faces anew  
That come with one or the other commitment *Deep*  
Gradually one by one here and there achieve a few  
Skills based on their ability, majority as if just trying to peep.  
*Such* is this ever lively self-refreshing creation of the *Divine*  
Where still we can find here and there *Angels* some  
Followed further more with the *Fire genuine* or pretentious within  
Go on purifying in multiple way self after self as they come.  
Responsibility on us is there to realize the Need to find it *Super*  
As usual people or creature naturally as ever *Long for Comfort*  
This all, fully or partially, is due to the faith in *Hari* the Topper  
Who has been there providing to see all shine with his support.  
*Awesome* indeed is the *Work* of the ever shining *Supreme Star*  
This expects us to remember at every point that Be Good and Do Good  
As along the moving time we pray with *Soul Contented* at work or altar  
Revealing, sometimes or rarely, in act each like the true *Son* indeed.

\*\*\*

## Poems

---

### Life Serene

Serene was our life when at birth  
Gradually becomes bustling with growth  
Everything required is there for life  
Followed equally by enough strife  
If our life continues to be ever serene  
The place where we are itself becomes a heaven  
Thoughts of us are the reasons for experiences such  
For generation next future needs to be better much  
On us then is the responsibility to create  
The society that is serene form perspectives all  
Hence ours should be serene minds ever  
In fact our life span depends on it there  
We need to have minds ever true first  
Even if it is not in us which still we expect  
As we expect, it would be better for all if we practice  
This is possible for all when they tell while sitting  
But need is there of the same thought executed being  
Therefore, let us be serene in our thought and behavior  
Serene will be our life and society at every moment forever.

\*\*\*

## Poems

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S. L. Peeran

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### Reflections and Poems

Law and Holy Scriptures require proper interpretation in most wise way, in proper perspective. Each verse has multidimensional view. Only learned, wise and experienced who have fully studied life from all angles should interpret our Holy Scriptures. Raw half cooked students passed out from Madrasas cannot be said to be matured and fully grown to interpret scriptural laws and its wise imports

\*\*\*

All previous religions and their books, their cultures have to be studied and absorbed. Islam is a continuation of Abrahamic religions, hence previous scriptures have to be fully studied and learnt. The evils that have cropped up in pure Islam of heaven which on dropping on Earth got polluted. Hence Allah swat through pure light of Prophet Mohammed (sas) again purified Islam of heaven to enable mankind to realize Truth and practice Truth which is nothing but Pure Love. Pure Love is nothing but surrender for supreme sacrifice on the altar of Almighty Lord, the merciful, gracious, and magnificent.

\*\*\*



## Poems

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### Heaven of Unknown

Why do I think always of oblivion?  
Like a reed to sing sad songs!  
Of separation from some unknown  
Source, of Deity of antiquity.  
My pain of living, desertion of love  
Of missing goals, hurt and sorrow  
Create an urge to dissolve my being.  
To fly to some unknown destination.  
Where my forgotten aliens live  
In a lost paradise of "hurries".  
With Moon eyed beauty of rare kind.  
Where milk and honey flows always.  
Where joys never fade or diminish.  
Where sensuousness flows like a stream.  
Oh! Why these urges of a flute's songs.  
Beckoning me to a long lost love.  
Tickling in me flames of love.  
That enflames me to zest and zeal.  
Frenzy gripping my whole being.  
To whirl like a dancing dervish.  
To bleed my heart with aches & throbs.  
O far away love, flown away from me.  
Return to me on wings of poesy.  
To carry me to heaven of unknown.

\*\*\*

### Intoxicating Wine

Each one of us is reflection of  
love & beauty  
But our shadows create fears  
Isn't it our unreal darker side?  
Not a mirror image, nor reflection!

Spreading of fragrance of rose, lotus  
Refreshing for the love to cherish  
Yearning increases for mingling  
O my beloved show thy lovely face

To put yearning seekers to swoon  
Like bright round shining sun  
Drives away the darkness forever  
Let's sing songs of love to  
thrill and cheer

Love's many facets mesmerize seekers  
Like old intoxicating wine

\*\*\*

## Poems in Translation

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### Saroj K. Padhi

**Dr. Saroj K. Padhi**, (b.1962), an Associate Professor of English in the Govt. of Odisha, is an eminent bilingual poet from Odisha . He has been writing poems in English and Odia since his school days. Till date he has published innumerable poems in most of the leading magazines of the country and abroad, two books of criticism, about 12 research articles in different journals and ten anthologies of poetry in English. He has worked as an editor of 'The Phoenix' and 'Replica' and is at present a member of the Editorial, Board, The Bhubaneswar Review, an online as well as print journal. His mail address: <skpadhi407@gmail.com>

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### SOLITUDE

Deep inside my chest a solitary bird sings  
of the bliss of solitude  
and see how the song in the banks rings  
as it reminisces moments savored in quietude;  
when ripples in thirsty soul of the river roll on  
rollicking in rhyme with mild wind  
in an attempt to forget everything  
before they merge and mingle into ultimate beatitude;  
the bird sings of the ease  
with which ripples try simmering sands to appease  
with their smiles born out of repeated failure to rise  
into waves of greater magnitude;  
where in a communion of a strange kind  
sighs wobbling in hot human hearts  
get cooled under shadows of shimmering waters,  
under shades of burning trees  
and fire in surrounding flowers is slowly subsumed  
under smokes rising from the river's parching heart;  
the bird has stopped singing now  
as it is listening to the sounds of a sad silence in souls  
of humans sleeping on the sprawling thorny banks  
and to the benumbed song of the river  
resounding in the body of the soaring sands !

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Dr. Sakti Prasad Chotray

Reader in English (Retd.), R.C. Das Lane, At/Po: Brahmapur (Odisha) – 760 004.  
Mobile: 0 9668856408.

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#### Books Treasure My Pleasure

They gave me three bouquets  
On the day of my superannuation.

I received them  
With so much delight  
Since  
Ne'er receiv'd before.

They present'd me  
An alluring gift pack  
Containing books,  
Wrapped in  
Golden color'd tinsel paper  
With flower prints on it.

It look'd so gorgeous —  
Seem'd a treat  
To my academic pursuit.

The withered bouquets  
Are still there on the rack  
And remind me  
The occasion —  
Never to return again.

I left the gift pack  
Untouch'd  
For a long time  
To keep its beauty in tact.

One day I lost  
The charm of the pack  
And tore it open  
And discover'd  
Three books inside —  
One, a book of verse,  
The other, a story book,  
The third one —  
An autobiography,  
All by writers of repute.

The withered bouquets  
May not give me  
Further pleasure;  
The books will certainly  
Treasure my pleasure.

\*\*\*

## Poems

---

**Dr. (Prof.) Suresh Chandra Dwivedy**

Retd Head, Deptt of English University of Allahabad. E mail: <scdubey55@gmail.com>

---

### Fire Of Hatred

When primitive people used fire  
They used it for peaceful purposes  
To live and let live was their mantra  
They prepared food with the help of fire  
And invented art of cooking  
Fire was worshipped as Agni.  
But nowadays we have become modern and Post modern Global and  
Super Global.  
Jayachand still hates Prithviraj.  
And the golden pages of Indian Culture are burnt in Shaheenbagh  
Brothers sisters lovers beloveds and my enemies  
Look for a while and see tears in the eyes of Shiva and Ganesh.  
Bharatmata loves her all children as usual  
Without Registers and Registration fees she loves 135 crore children.  
Our dear mother is full of love.  
Then why do you burn homes, shops and minars?  
The weapon of love is more powerful than hatred.  
Let us give a return gift to Bharatmata.  
Let us love and honor her like Shivaji  
To protect Indian Constitution, Tricolor, Gita, Ganga and Govind.  
Kuputro jayet kvachidampi  
Mata kumata na bhavati  
Let us burn all hatred and jealousy in the fire of patriotism.

\*\*\*

## Poems

---

### Mother Earth

(For Hon. Achut Samant)

Earth is the best place for love and world peace.  
Lord Jagannath whispered this truth in my ears.  
When I visited Lord Jagannath temple lost five years ago.  
He often talks to me with love and affection.  
Earth is the best place for brotherhood.  
Earth is the best place for friendship.  
Earth is the best place for equality.  
It fills our heart mind soul with Karun Rasa.  
Earth is the best place for Democratic values.  
Earth is full of sympathy and empathy.  
Earth is of many colours and many peoples.  
But she is the mother of all of us.  
Earth teaches us virtues and morality.  
She loves our children and grandchildren.  
Oceans are like her green sari.  
And mountains are her breast.  
Earth teaches us to end all wars, and terrorism.  
Casteism, favouritism, vanshavad, communalism and nepotism.  
Mother Earth treats all her children equally.  
Black, White, Yellow, Brown, Dalits, Girijan and Backwards.  
She offers her nectar like milk to all of us.  
She makes no distinction between man and woman nation and nation.  
Earth teaches us to be modest and tolerant.  
She is orderly and arranged like a beautiful painting.  
Regularise and organize like her O friends.  
Thank you Mother Earth for giving us a comfortable berth.  
Earth moves round the Sun.  
And Sun kisses her beautiful face daily early in the morning.  
Earth is the beloved of Lord Vishnu.  
I seek permission from my mother for padasparsh.  
Our liberal mother permits us to play, run, jump and enjoy on her body.

---

**Note:** Editor regrets the inadvertent mistake in ascribing its authorship to Dr. SC Pande, due to the same name. **It is** Dr SC Dwivedy's original work and all credit goes to him.

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## Poems

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### Dr. Suresh Chandra Pande

Retd. Professor of English. Poet and, critic. **Contact:** Uttranchal Colony Haldwani – 263 139;  
**Email:** <drsureshpande@rediffmail.com>

---

#### CAA- CAA- CAA\*

Caws the crow  
Flapping and fluttering  
Hopping  
From one branch

Heading  
To nearby ranch.  
CAA- CAA- CAA  
Caws the crow  
the top of a tree  
Turning up-side-down.

Having a rotten rat  
On its beak, the fat  
Crow looks tempting

Inviting clans pro-biting.

Kith and kin lob their share  
Come together march and dare  
To overthrow the rule of  
After all it's better to caw.

At once the crow's  
Alluring hub grows  
Local and global  
All watch en masse .  
From atop the terrace  
And roof top's brace  
Down on the walkways

Unruly mob swarming .

Their raucous voices rising  
From earth to sky : Quaking  
A nation-wide rally shaking  
The mighty pillars by cawing.

CAA- CAA- CAA  
Caws the crow  
Flapping on government  
And on academic giants.

Citizenship and expatriation  
As if ripples bulging the nation

In democracy all and sundry

Need welfare not quandary .

Like proverbial straw  
That broke camel's hunch  
Street shows have no morality  
Save toxic- mix plus impunity.

Ominous anarchy  
Trading a dog fight  
National rivalries  
Hogging the limelight.

CAA- CAA- CAA  
Caws the crow  
Growing now in size

## Poems

---

Aloud to apprise—

'Has become a rook  
Big and large to shook  
Every hidey-hole and nook

Verily!  
A sub-continental spook.

Oh! How it inflates  
Spectre of piddly bureaucracy  
In a brawny shield of democracy  
Reared by hardcore religiosity.

Slowly receding to perch  
Leaving the globe in the lurch  
The indigenous rook  
Publicly states-Vasudhaiv  
Kutumbakam.

CAA- CAA- CAA  
Caws the crow  
In effect to grow.

---

\*CAA-Citizenship Amendment Act :  
Passed on 12'th December 2019.

### Pensive Dreams

Not long ago, uninvitedly  
It happened accordingly  
Though outwardly.  
I stumbled upon  
Lone  
Avant-garde's home.  
' Had a bulky bundle  
Wrapped  
All set to trundle .

The bulk bubbled  
Dreams ambled  
Desires rambled .

Sojourn looked ,as if  
All a dip and dive  
A pleasant thrive.

Gap of some years.....!  
Sack harked back  
Left to a track .

Phone bell rang  
Asked for number  
If I do remember.

Packed packet came  
Removing the wrap same  
I noticed.....!

Some were sighing  
Some sobbing  
Others languishing.

All were in breakdown  
Taking their last breath  
About to bite the dust.

What then ' had  
A brand new wad  
Bedecked in beauty pristine.

A quest to decode  
Code involving  
The invisible entity  
Within visible self .

\*\*\*

## Poems

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### Dr. S. Padmapriya

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### Contrition

Standing before all,  
Like an apologetic decadent tree,  
Worn out - sans leaves, flowers  
Or fruits....a struggling life pushing  
And pulling against myriad forces,  
Beyond human control!

In a state of perennial contrition,  
The human life filled with countless  
Moments of mind wrenching choices,  
Denials, discoveries and deviations...

Just as one believes,  
That we may have just made it,  
We struggle from the beginning,  
Like a king who has lost to a pawn,  
On the chessboard of lives,  
As the Gods play...  
And smile sans contrition.

Still we continue to twinkle,  
A blink in the cosmos experience,  
That our lives are insufficient,  
In the blissful games of the Gods,  
Who deny mortals contrition  
And sometimes even compassion,  
But why blame those above us for



## Poems

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Their contrition or lack of it,  
Pawns though we might be,  
Still have a chance,  
To take over kingdoms,  
On the intriguing Human chessboard!

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### Hard and Spiky

Like a Jack fruit this woman  
Tender fruitlets of loving bliss  
Hides beneath her hard surface  
A wondrous garden  
Hiding miraculous treasures  
*Kamedhenus* and *Kalpavrikshas*  
The hard exterior to protect the  
Soft insides filled with delightful  
Colours of exceedingly excellent unearthly  
Beauty like fountains of diamonds and rubies  
Open seas of amethysts and peridots  
Sgraffito parts of those limitless layers and receive  
Exemplary contrasting images of matchless grandeur  
Patterns of grace beyond reasonable comprehension  
Texture like milk sweets  
Revealing such complexity of Godly beauty  
Mind boggling ethereal enigmatic eclectic joyful splendour  
This is that fabulous creation  
That is born once in a millennia  
Rare gem of exquisite compassion  
Who sheds tears for those suffering  
Such is her persona  
Make her yours and the entire of cosmos  
The bygones the present and the future  
And everything in it will be ours

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## Poems

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### Dr. T. V. Reddy, Tirupati

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#### Invincible Virus

Now the world shivers with the new virus  
the dreaded Corona that defies and dumps  
the humanity into dark and arrests all progress;  
Industry limps and frail economy slumps;  
It flies all around the fear-stricken globe  
and baffles the world of science and tech,  
enjoys a fast free ride with its infecting robe  
across continents spreading horrible wreck;  
The giant nation with its newly rising power  
and iron hold on road, land, sky and sea  
finds itself at sea in the iron grip of virus cover  
and bends and bows finding no easy key;  
Nature knows ways to punish her foes  
that try to destroy and burn her virgin wealth;  
Modern man with his pride and ego shows  
no concern to mother nature's health  
And plays havoc with all the elements five  
and gloats vainly over his supremacy on all;  
When the world rides on ego's dashing drive  
it gets Nature's sudden shock and terrible call;  
The alarming rising level of carbon emission  
threatens to toll the fierce knell of all life;  
It needs an emergency of course correction  
to sustain life on earth amid shock and strife;

## Poems

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Ports and airports now wear a deserted look  
Masks to prevent infection are in demand;  
World's economy quarantine measures shook;  
Whither does lead this civilization grand?  
Dragon, dumb and de-fanged, is quiet as a dove;  
Amid the densely dark and deadly Corona cloud  
a cryptic silver line twinkles that makes us bow;  
We rise only to fall with a bigger bang aloud.  
Confounding are wild theories on vicious Corona  
Is it nature's vendetta with a label made in China?

### Lead us to Thy World

Free our shivering minds, a broken mirror,  
from the roaring threats and acts of terror,  
from coercive, aggressive, divisive, thoughts,  
cringing, crawling, crimping, crippling clots,  
from riotous, licentious, rotting moves,  
reechy, regressive, retarding, enslaving grooves,  
compressing, blocking, binding narrow walls,  
foul, fancied, frenzied, false fanatic calls,  
award winners, runners, returners and sinners,  
negative thinkers, hypocrites and spinners,  
from human bombs and inhuman terror jaws,  
perverted intellects, robbing leaders and laws;  
Make real the joy of rainbow and the spring,  
the joy of living on this awesome earth to sing;  
Protect us from the looming clouds of night  
Lead us to Thy world of peace, joy and light.

## Poems

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### World, a Trade Centre

World is now a colossal Trade Centre  
always busy with trading goods and thoughts;  
All seasons are one, cold is not winter;  
Products, grains, pulses and plans are in lots;  
Human relations too are grossly commercial;  
Mother and child think on dry money-lines;  
Bond of blood or kin loses even value facial  
Values are weighed and judged on utility signs;  
Those who help the poor and the helpless old  
who can't help anyone at that frail feeble age  
are friends and well-wishers real, pure as gold;  
They deserve a song of praise and higher stage;  
For good or bad, friends true we need, though few;  
Kind words from a pure heart are pearls of dew.

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## Poems

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### U Atreya Sarma

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#### Hooray February!

I love February because it's a brewery  
Of chilly winter and sunny warmth.

I love February because it isn't a cocky first;  
But only a modest next like how I always prefer  
Taking a second row chair.  
Likewise my car, hello,  
Is not a Uno, but an Alto!

I love February because it's the baby  
Of the promising January.  
And with that promise  
February bears March  
With all its vernal vibrancy.

I love water, aqua: It's the spring of life.  
I love February because I am an Aquarian.

I love February because the holy water eponymous  
Purifies me and makes me vigorous  
A la Februa, the great Roman festival.

I love February because it's doughty,  
Has the will to survive:  
From a long monthless limbo to the twelfth place  
Then to the second in the calendar –  
It was a saga of freedom fight  
In the hoary history of time.

## Poems

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I love February because it's a month of lovely violets  
Of diverse hues and scents galore  
And of amethysts that keep you sober.

I love February because shortie it is though  
It's the one month that determines  
The leap or otherwise of a year.

They malign February as 'hollow' and ominous.  
"Don't fib" I counter. "It is 'full' and luminous:  
I do the work of thirty or thirty one days  
Just in twenty nine or twenty eight days  
To earn a full month's pay  
Like for any other month.  
Then isn't February a 'full' month?"

No triskaidekaphobe, I love the thirteenth  
For it symbolises the eternal crusade  
Against superstition and discrimination.

God loves it too for He has made the date  
A rendezvous of countless events  
No less happy than any other.

I love Feb thirteenth  
Because I came into this world  
On that unique date.  
For me it's always the first.

*Long live Februarians!*  
*Long live humanitarians!*

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## Poems

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### Y. V. Kambar

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#### The Labourer

In, by the side of hill  
At the front of trees  
On the freshly sky  
Rose eagerly on that day.

The misty space  
Ready to welcome  
The river was leaping since last night  
Birds were busy - alarming others in joy !

So cute was that scene!  
Even a small insect was dancing happily  
Leaves, buds sailed proudly in mute  
To listen the voice of that day's owner!

The Labour of toil had a great faith  
In duty, but not on words  
In his behavior;  
Declares - the immortal truth - "Work is worship"!

The lawyer - of authenticator; now crossed the American hills  
Hiding his vibrant hot in to himself  
Focusing: "Strength must be in inner side;  
But not on outer faces "  
Was his judgement fair!

The supreme of the wisdom  
Shone on Iran desert  
Holding his brilliant lights to himself  
Spoke: "Wit must be for enemies  
In well manner without any fallibility"!

The earthen Mighty  
And world's immense power  
Even though in his last hours  
Landed down peacefully  
Said: "Gold never wants any justification"!

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## Poems in Translation

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From Nepali/Hindi

### Birbhadra Karkidholi

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### Diary

Every New Year  
you used to send  
a beautiful Greeting Card  
holding a bouquet of gorgeous flowers  
in your stunning soft hands.

This year  
you have sent a diary  
with best wishes.  
Perhaps, you won't believe  
I have diary for each year  
but for writing something special  
I don't have unusual theme,  
special word,  
definite mind, or colour.  
Each year's diary  
Is with me  
as such  
simply blank!



## Poems in Translation

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### Life – An Endless Tale

He went  
never to return.

Life is only an endless tale  
without source of tears anywhere;  
it's like a seeping drop  
from the roof –  
saying so, he went back.

After his disappearance  
from the mountain  
I felt:  
by and large every flower blooms here  
but not at each and every moment.  
Everything can be forgotten  
But, what I want to forget  
can't be forgotten.  
In fact,  
there is no response to every inquiry.

She called her own tears  
a drop on the roof;  
it's not crucial  
that I too construe that  
in the same sense.

Vast, the word of eyes!  
Tears too have profound meaning.  
In each and every tear-drop  
you have to read my mind,  
my mind... .

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## Poems in Translation

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**From Hindi**

### Suman Shekhar

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### Weaver-bird's Nest

A corner  
of drawing-room's bedecked  
with weaver-bird's nest.  
The nest  
woven from the bits of straw.  
A wonderful artifact!

The bird picked straws  
from far and near,  
put them together  
and sang a song of consummation.  
With her toil,  
she contemplated being cosy  
in summer and winter,  
enjoying the seasons  
from her home,  
swinging with her darling,  
singing lullabies  
to the little ones  
safely in her  
sweet, sweet home.

The heartless man  
just for the beautification,  
destroyed weaver's world,  
rendered homeless.

The nest in drawing-room—  
soulless,  
hung in the corner—  
a silent spectator;  
silently sings in sobs  
the sad tale  
of broken desires and dreams.

### Every Day - A Question Mark

The crooked  
adorn the seat,  
the Truth, in chains.  
How to survive:  
when death, the day's order,  
rare, the bread.

The terrorists tread  
idyllic woods,  
even the air, distressed.

Green pine needles  
donning blood-red color.  
How to carry on  
when each day  
looks like a question mark?

## Poems in Translation

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Mother's worried about  
the school-gone son;  
wife, of husband  
on errand;  
none know where  
the tragedy may take place.  
None know  
where the bomb may explode;  
the terrorists've come out  
to devastate the dreams'  
domain,  
tear the heart of mountain.

### Who Am I ?

When  
he called me yesterday,

my name struck  
weird to me.  
What? Who?  
I am the same  
with the same name.  
Had I been given  
some other name,  
would that have changed me?  
Now  
time and again,  
I sense,  
I am something eerie  
Besides my name.  
What am I?  
Who am I?  
I ask myself  
umpteenth times.

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## Reviews

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**Reddy T. Vasudeva, *Farewell Ring and Other Stories*,  
New Delhi, Authors Press, 2019 Rs. 395/.**

**Arora O.P., *The River Flows Eternally*, New Delhi,  
Authors Press, 2019, Rs. 295/**

—Dr. Manas Bakshi—

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### 1

There are instances galore of powerful poets having carved a niche in writing short stories also; but it seldom happens the other way, that is, prolific writers cannot - rather dare not - try their hands in penning poetry. This is true not only to the Indian English genre but also to the creative personalities of some other languages. Here, we are taking up two books of short stories by two established Indian English poets: T. V. Reddy and O.P. Arora for review.

*Farewell Ring and Other Stories* by Reddy comprises some twenty stories - each reflecting his insightful observation; it emerges from staying grounded to the down-to-earth reality. In the words of Reddy, "These are based on real situations" he was connected with. The opening story, "Palmist", is all about the business of the palmists everywhere whose forecasts are more often false than true. In the story, Venkaiah realises the same when a telegram conveying 'Legal case lost' reaches him and shatters his faith in palmistry. "A Cup of Milk" is a story of filial love of Krishnaiah for his daughter Latha, who, even after undergoing surgical operation of heart, succumbed to her ailment. But Krishnaiah went on offering a cup of milk with Horlicks to her photo as he fondly did before when Latha was alive. "In search of a job" digs at one of our socio-economic maladies which compel a highly qualified contract lecturer face deprivation of service benefits along with acute misery of living three jobless years and, finally, accept a job in a private school keeping alive the moral lesson "Work is Worship". In 'Guruji' is depicted the arduous struggle Srinivas had to wage while doing research work as an independent candidate and seeking the guidance of Prof. Dikshit who passed away untimely - clearing off the debts of his only pampered daughter and her husband. "Valentine's Day", what is its significance: to remain faithful to love forever. Most likely - as Reddy opines. Raju, now a middle-aged widower, loved his wife Radha madly; they lived like a pair of doves. After Radha's death, her sister Rathi appeared on the scene to seduce Raju into sexual relation with her but failed as Raju was firm on his stand: "one man and one wife in a life time". The title story of the book, "Farewell Ring", takes umbrage at our social system plagued by poverty, illiteracy, corruption, dishonesty, and our education system bereft of dynamism. Raghu, a dedicated

## Reviews

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school teacher, contributes his level best to make a village school really a pathshala, ameliorating its ambience along with the help of his student Padma. At the time of Padma's marriage, Raghu blesses her with a gold ring that was the Farewell gift at the time of his retirement - a true gesture of generosity. Just fine. "Change Of Values" begins with a dialogue between an old lady Sarada, a retired Headmistress and her fourteen year old grandson, Ranjit, on the style of hair cut which seemed to her "the protruding hair of a porcupine". Changing way of life and human values in keeping with time and place is the theme of the story. In "Swamiji" is reiterated the lesson of Gita which he narrates as "Lord Krishna asks us to see the Supreme God in all living beings and all living entities in Him". Suresh, coming in contact with him, is enlightened when Swamiji gives tips regarding food habit affecting *sattwic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic* aspects of life. More pertinently, he raises the question of hunger when "Cry of the stomach becomes a cry in wilderness". If "The Seed" is of faith in man himself, Dr. Reddy has definitely sown it in this story which tells how ten years back Deepavali Festival was celebrated with zeal and joy; how time has changed with political strings and bureaucratic links holding sway and even then, how - with confidence in oneself and trust in God - still "the seed is strong" among human beings. "God's Play" is an absorbing story invoking a philosophical bend of mind that seeks to explore human relations - not only with Kandasami but some others also - from different angles only to conclude "when death takes us back, who is the son and who is the father? All this is God's play". "The Curse" is an eye-opener to our society still ridden with the stigma of dowry and the vicious trap of caste discrimination. Sastri, a great Vedic scholar - having spent much of his meager earnings from teaching Vedas for the benefit of his students, could hardly save anything for his daughter's marriage; but how he got over the crisis with the help of Swami at Srigiri is enthralling to go through. That helping someone to recover 'from the divine wrath' was just a trick is narrated in the story. In "Pilgrimage", we find a true picture of Kashmir, of course, prior to revocation of Article 370 on and from August 6, 2019 followed by some undesirable political batter and bickerings. But undeniably, Kashmiris - in general - are not opposed to India but political manoeuvring, constant provocation and money supply from Pakistan makes the situation grave causing trouble and turmoil to the peace-loving Kashmiris; so much so that they confess: "We live on hard work. Though Allah is our God, the God who saves us from hunger is Lord Amarnath". "A Message" seems not just a story but a flash of reality. Rama Sarma - largely influenced by the spiritual talk of a pandit, Sastrigaru, at a T.V. channel, changed his life style to lead a disciplined life. He and his close friend, Venkat Rao decided to visit the great pandit at his residence at Moolapalli but were let down facing the reality: Sastrigaru's own life style and the environment he lived in. Asked why it was like that, the pandit replied, referring to our leaders - "We speak for others. But it is one in a million who puts his noble words into practice". "Gratitude" is such a story that, on the one hand, depletes

## Reviews

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our ethical retardation and change in the living values of people even in the villages despite technical advancement on the other. But at the end, Murthy's gesture of gratitude to Raghu Rao, his father's close friend and a village head, establishes that moral values are not yet fully lost. "Vanity Fair" neatly exposes our society's pseudo-intellectuals, award-winning shallow writers and some media barons are adulated. They were accorded a warm reception and were allowed to beat their own drums, as long as they wished in an International culture-cum-literary Festival; while, on the other hand, Govind and Robert Raju, who were to speak on Sanatana Dharma and Multi-culturalism respectively, were allowed just five minutes each. It meant 'beginning is the ending'. But they consoled themselves having visited some great places at that time which were like 'a few oases' in the 'desert of a conference'. "Walk The Talk" resembles the theme of "A Message" to the extent it raises the question - "What is the use of quoting countless *slokas* from the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, what is the use of giving *pravachanams* everyday when the so-called god-men can't put their words in practice?" "The Farmer" reflects the present agrarian scenario where the spark is missing in the eyes of rural people as farming is no more so remunerative as before and, at the same time, migration to urban areas is no better choice as the "Collapse of economy" is equally baneful there too. The next story, 'A Shattered Dream', is about Raghu, one of the present generation college students who wants more freedom and considers its absence nothing but 'academic slavery'. How his committing suicide out of frustration shattered the dream of his father Chengaiah is narrated here. "Drought" is a bold story against superstition. There was a tree higher than a nearby temple in a village. There was once drought in the village. At the time of Sankranti, a mendicant, a self-projected expert in palmistry, affirmed that it was the reason for drought as God could not tolerate the tallish tree. Taking his words as oracle, some villagers cut the branches above the trunk but drought continued. The shadow-giving tree, having been cut to size ruthlessly, failed to invite clouds and villagers 'missed the very breath of their life also'. It was too late when the villagers realised their fault. The concluding story, "Simian Culture", has a similar backdrop exposing the pangs of agro-based rural life. Drought and other hazards of cultivation apart, crops destroyed by monkeys and elephants also cause serious concern. What is strikingly present in the story is monkeys' unity which is lacking very often in human society. It becomes clear to Raghu and his friend Krishna that simian feeling of attachment and bond of affinity are 'superb' and "We are all living beings and traces of the one omnipresent Lord".

With a human heart at the core, Reddy depicts his stories with no sign of unmusical complication anywhere. Most of his outpourings seemed to me reflective enough - some might have been taken from real life. He has a probing mind, it is analytical as well. Reddy is at his best while subtly highlighting the complexity of

## Reviews

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relationships, and at the same time making his narratives lucid and not infantile. It was nice to go through many of his stories; but Reddy seems to have a weakness for the name Raghu who, as a pivotal figure, has appeared in more stories than one.

### 2

*The River Flows Eternally* is a collection of seventeen short stories by O.P. Arora, a noted poet and novelist. He weaves his words around a variety of subjects of relevance in contemporary society. Let us begin with the first story - "Bridge over the Bank". It is a love story of Pratibha and Vikas. How Rakesh, Pratibha's father, agrees to get his daughter wedded to Vikas, how does her uncle Narendra cleverly helps them to cross the hurdle has been aptly narrated. Interestingly, the dialogue between the couple brings in sharp focus the contrast between emotional outburst and rational approach to the issue of elopement, attitude of old people to love scene in public places now a days and, finally, the wittily knit twist. "When You Blow The Conch" is a story of developing self-reliance. An affluent businessman settled in England is Kapoor whose only daughter Neha is married to Vikas who works for Kapoor's company. At a point of time, Vikas feels dejected and decides to come back, but Neha does not agree unless she is divorced. It is then Vikas' old friend Navin offers him a managerial job in his new store. Kapoor, initially aggrieved, is convinced by Neha that what Vikas did was in proof of his individual identity as a man capable of earning his own way. In "Rashmi", the third story, are explored some strange facets of human relationships. Rashmi was the lady in whose contact the protagonist in the story came when, as a University student, he suffered from typhoid. Though apparently a Puritan who was aware of the scandalous stories aired about Rashmi, the protagonist was nursed and cared by her all along to recover from his illness. When he returned to Chandigarh, his dream city, after a long time, he came to know that Rashmi, that old slut, was not well. Why old slut? Because Rashmi wanted a baby from him but he declined fearing that, unless married, it would be treated as a bastard afterwards. All these memories compelled him to visit Rashmi when she was sick - "a frail and giant figure lay dying on the bed". He brought the best doctors for her treatment. He did his level best for her recovery. The story ends with the realisation of the truth that "human warmth is more precious than moral platitudes". "The Safe Channel" is about middle class sentiments, aspirations and limitations. Mr Rao, a director of a company, is simple in his life style. He takes a DTC bus if fails to have the chartered one; he cannot take stringent action against Vijay, his subordinate, in fear of backing out later at the behest of higher authority. While self-conscious Rao is not happy with *dosa* or *idli* regularly and likes to share with his subordinates their meal, he envies his neighbour, Amit's elegant Punjabi wife. When he got a chance to deliver a lecture in a seminar on administration, he changed his mind to stray away from earning the displeasure of



## Reviews

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his authority which, in other words, was a 'Safe channel' for him. "When the Sun Rises" is a nice story of present day perspective with an eye to some city-bred advanced youths' attitude to live-in-relationships vis-a-vis a conjugal one. Avinash and Ria love each other as Vishal and Neha - enjoying live-in-relationships. Vishal and Neha agreed to wedlock but Avinash and Ria did not. A time comes Ria leaves Avinash only to come back pregnant. There was scope for abortion but Ria gives birth to a girl child. This was what changed her mindset; not only that, her emotional attachment and love turned Avinash into a different man - both realising the values of a sacred institution like marriage. In "The Spark" the author dwells on human spirit which, a man of principle like Atul, kept alive till his untimely death. In a government office, an uncompromising youngman like Atul, who avowed man "can shake the mountains if he has determination" is transferred to Mizoram and then to Nagaland only because he could not oblige the concerned minister. On his death, the spark too died it seemed, but in reality, it did not because moral and ethical values never die. While going through "Shazia" I was reminded of Tagore's "Religion of Man". What is the significance of a religion? Faith in humanism and regard for other religions. Do we really bear it in mind? We do if, like Savita and her husband, we get friends like Shazia and Abdul Sattar. They, as neighbours, were helpful to each other's family, shared festival fervour pleasantly. The story begins with the death news of Shazia - a profound shock to the Hindu family. Human relationships here cross the barriers of religion - because to be Hindu or Muslim does not matter; to quote Shazia: "We are all human beings". And they proved the same in reality. "Dreams Are Dreams" throws light on the world of dream of some women whose dreams are shattered after marriage which mostly "is strange game". When romance fades out, staleness overtakes the couples; even fulfilment of biological needs becomes a routine if viewed in terms of reality. In "When Will You Grow up", Manjula advises good looking Swati to get married and settle in life. Her senior Dr. Prashant also speaks alike. Swati does not like this type of meddling in by others since she is grown up now. Her way of 'thinking out-of-the-box' is finally accepted by Dr. Prashant when he asserts, "Forget about the petty people barking on the roadside. They will never win". "A Flash In The Dark" flashes a message of maintaining human values by the narrator and heralds the cause of justice by refusing to safeguard a culprit - even turning down an undesirable request from a friend like Rahul. "Bouncing Through The Dark Lanes" is a story of unrequited love. Vimal loved seriously, remained faithful to his lady love, who, in return, married a rich car dealer and haughtily observed "love has nothing to do with marriage. Love is a fancy. It is for fun. Masti". Vimal, remaining unmarried, comes to know one day that she was suffering from cancer. When he met her, she expressed her desire to go abroad before the chemo sessions, and before that, to compensate Vimal. Vimal considered himself a "fool, but not that big a fool" who could cheat others. His honest confession was when she "put her lips on mine..... I didn't feel one with

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them now. I couldn't bring passion into them. I withdrew and moved out". The next story "Fairies Never Sing For Them" raises a simple question - is honesty always rewarded? No, at least it has not happened like that to Rajendra. Hailing from a remote village in Bihar, Rajendra qualified himself; he was the first graduate there but did not get a suitable job. Since he had dependent family members, he reached Delhi in search of a job. What he got was the job of a casual labourer with the help of Lakhan, another labourer. He married Gomati and lived a disciplined life. One day, on his way back home, he got a purse wherein there were Rs. 10,000/ and address of its owner - Seth Bhagawan Dass. Despite Gomati's objection, he resolved to return it in the hope of seeing the light of a better life but it happened otherwise. "Straws In The Wind" is a different type of love story. Avinash, a poet meets a beautiful girl Sugandhi at a poetry Fest. She asks him to spare an evening at Garden Cafe reading poetry only for her. Her touch and sexual urge moves Avinash but as a married man, he restrains himself initially weighing his moral responsibility to his wife. Finally, he submits to Sugandhi's sexual appeal, and not to his own moral sensibility, to enliven his mind and body as much as his poetry. "Goodbye To Angels" is an eye opener to all who hardly remain grateful to someone ideal after his death. Here, the story is about an ideal doctor, Dr. Vinod Kumar Anand, who, unlike other money-minded doctors, always charged minimum and won love of all patients. After his sudden death, his house was converted into 'Dr. Anand Charitable Hospital'. On his death anniversary, none remembered him, not even his smart wife, who more blatantly remarked "one has to live" his/her life and that was why 'she rented the clinic to one Dr. Gupta'. Story number fifteenth is another episode of human relationships which is 'Not So Easy' to maintain. Sudeep and Ria lived together for over an year. Ria enjoyed full freedom to lead her life the way she liked but to spend five days with an Australian in Taj was a venture, Sudeep objected to. When she returned with a 'sad and crest-fallen' look, Sudeep left her forever in protest against her moral depravity. "Every Boat Has A Hole" points at how sheer fun can, at times, keep us throbbing with its impact on spiritual balance or mental make-up if we are not corrupt in practical life. A Guruji normally using *Kurta-Pyjama*, appears at the costa coffee in a T-shirt presented by Vivek on his return from England. A funny incident that took place justifies the point. The last story "Vibes In The Soul" focuses on human nature; sense of gratitude of a servant, Neeraj, to his master on the one hand and Sheena playing the role of Seema to sing before Sir with her melodious voice, on the other, make the story an interesting read.

Dr. O.P. Arora's canvas is wide, characters depicted varied and the message conveyed through each story emanates from and revolves around the cult of humanism. With an insight for detail, characters are etched with sensitivity; his vivid story telling has many layers of implication, many levels of artistic exposition. Being an academic with background in English literature, he has well acquired the skill to express himself in such a way that his stories sound lilted.

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### A Review of ‘To My Mother’, a Poem by Alexander Raju

— Melkie Admassu —

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### 3

*To My Mother*, a poem by Alexander Raju published in the anthology titled *Universal Oneness* (2019, Authors Press, New Delhi) edited by Vivekanand Jha, is written in memory of a highly virtuous, very affectionate, most loving, and an extremely thoughtful and considerate mother who passed away after having been admitted to hospital. There is no need to introduce Alexander Raju to the Indian poetry lovers, as he has been writing poems for the last half a century or so. He has four collections of poems, five novels and a collection of short stories to his credit.

The poem ‘To My Mother’ is composed of eleven stanzas in which most of them are quatrains. Each stanza discusses a different point which is semantically related to the points treated in stanzas that come immediately before and after it. The language used is simple and beautiful, and there is no word or expression unrelated to the subject under discussion.

The poem starts as the speaker (her son) stands beside the coffin of his dead mother and speaks in retrospection about the indescribable love and the immense motherly sacrifice she bestowed upon him from the very day he was conceived to the very moment she passed away.

In the coffin you are laid lifeless,  
And as I stand nearby realize,  
The true depth and width of your love  
And sacrifice you made for me!

The speaker continues and tells readers that he works abroad and whenever he went back home, he used to pay her a visit. But this time he was too tired to go to her abode and visit her. Having cognizance of this, she went to see him on the day of his arrival. He adds that on that evening, they sat closer, ate together and talked for a long time and even took ‘the last selfie together’. The speaker says his mother was waiting for him to come back from abroad all day long before she was admitted to hospital the next morning. He could meet her only for a brief moment, a little before her soul ‘left this world’. This threw him to sorrow and regrets, since he “...hoped to spend some more moments” (*5<sup>th</sup> stanza, line 3*) and tell her things he

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remembered. We wish our loved ones; especially our mothers to live forever with us despite the fact that we all are mortals. The speaker's wish is not unnatural. He addresses her as: "I thought you would be forever with me" (5<sup>th</sup> stanza, line 4). That is impossible now; for she has gone forever. The speaker confesses that his tears faded his eyes, and regrets that he should have served her as much as he desired, yet his busy days prevented him to do so. His mother never took this seriously, but gave him 'a pardon of smile' (6<sup>th</sup> stanza).

The speaker goes back to the moment he was conceived, his life in the womb and his birth as her 'first born' - 'dream child'. For a woman, who is married with her virginity, usually the first pregnancy follows many sacrifices done upon her flesh and her mind. The child is conceived only after she sacrifices her virginity, her valuable treasure. Then, her body gets 'deformed' with a huge protrusion in front. And her mind made busy with the thought of the fetus inside. The speaker recreates a similar situation that his mother certainly went through when he was conceived and when he grew in the womb as her first child.

I was your first born, your dream child,  
You broke your sacred virgin knot  
To conceive me, I conquered your womb,  
I settled, taking your life-blood,.....(8<sup>th</sup> stanza)

Perhaps your swollen belly turned  
You ugly,..... (9<sup>th</sup> stanza)

He continues, as a first born, he became the first child to suck her breasts and slapped hard on her chest. ...And "became the first child to suck / Your breasts, slapping hard on your chest". The bond that develops between a child and a mother is very strong and can never be severed. It starts from the very day the child is conceived. The child grows inside the mother for nine months. She carries it, sustains its life by giving it her blood through the umbilical cord. Once she gives birth to it, the physical connection is cut. It is never severed in the heart. It is not only milk that she gives her child; it is love, care and energy that it uses to face the long day on earth. The child is only 'a selfish exploiter' as the speaker of the poem puts it—

Weren't I a selfish exploiter?  
It wasn't milk but true affection  
You poured into me and I grew  
To be able to stand on my feet;  
You were giving me the energy  
To face my long day on this earth (10<sup>th</sup> stanza ).

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Today, as she is 'laid down lifeless', the speaker realizes how much she loved him. He beseeches her to give him a second chance so that he could serve her better. But all is in vain.

Today, as you're laid down lifeless,  
I realize how much you loved me;  
I wish, if there's a second life  
Give me a chance to serve you better (*11<sup>th</sup> stanza*).

In conclusion, the poem, *To My Mother*, is a lamentation or an elegy, and its tone is mournful, emotional and moving. Its subject is a bit related to that of Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard' in that the poet laments on the death of the unknown sages of the village. The discussed poem could be seen as a poetic expression of a son's indescribable love for, and strong attachment toward, his mother as well. Also, through the speaker who seems to be so grateful to his mother, it honors, and pays homage/tribute to all the mothers of the world who sacrifice themselves and everything of theirs for their children.

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**K. V. Raghupathi. *The Mountain is Calling: A Collection of Poems*. White Falcon, 2013, pp. 100, Rs. 200/-**

—VVB Rama Rao—

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### 4

Dr. Raghupati has been a professor of English in the Central University of Tamilnadu in Tiruvarur. The blurb tells us that he is recipient of several awards topped by Best Yogic Publication for the year 1998 and the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018, New Delhi. It says on the top: "Highly reflective and meditative poems of wisdom from the pen of mystical poet. K V Raghupathi is the author of *Vice of the Valley*, *Wisdom of the Peepal Tree*, *Samarparna* and *Dispersed Symphonies*.

The mountain has something to tell you.  
Don't go back to sleep / It's not the knowledge of the world  
But I is something else / That you cannot grasp mundanely.  
Don't go back to sleep. / The mountain has something to tell you  
come and relish before you go back to sleep.

Here is the poet-philosopher's own exegesis. I quote: "the mountain has its wisdom. No one recognizes it. Its wisdom is its stillness and silence; it receives rain

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and light and gives back in the form of trees for birds and animals to dwell. It never grows and never dies; it is ageless, ancient and primitive. ... The mountain is a mountain; it never dies though the trees die, flowers wither. It is Sthita prajna.”

There are hundred brief declarations each of which starts again and again with “The Mountain is calling, perhaps for due emphasis.

While you, they (bees, birds, and butterflies) are louts ‘ The moon dances in the dirty pond. (p.2)

You know everything while knowing / The moon is hanging, not in water (p.3)

Samadhi is perfect balance / Deep involvement is action / It is thinking and no action / It is action and no thinking. (p. 4)

Moksha is doing everything in nothing. (p.6)

The sun never moves, but shines / Nothing moves in the sky, because there is no sky. (p.9)

When the birds from the south land / When the land recedes not in rain

When the sky is no sky / But yields space for multitude milky ways

There sits a yogi under the Peepal / Who says, “I know not why?”(p.13)

The rat is safe in the hole / Eagle simply lies in the space / Not knowing its illimitable emptiness. (15)

Prudence is seeing ‘suchness’ in things / And no ‘suchness’ in living. (p.16)

In bird less dark sky / My consciousness shrinks like a flower. (p.21)

There is no other way / Yogadharma happens to those who sail alone. (p.30)

Spirituality is action in inaction / And inaction in action / The bud unfurls

But the plant doesn’t bleed / The roots are strong

Because the earth. /Is not slushy. (p.32)

The vast expanse sky is open to bestow Dharma / But every on is

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blocking the way. (p.41)

How can there be a shadow upon a shadow? / How can there be a light upon a light?

We live in a nonsensical world of our own. (p.53)

What is seen is my being / Between the sailing moon

And the static stars / There is not a single star visible.

It is my being, my consciousness. (p.65)

The rain has washed every thin / Except misery on the empty land.

The monk feels sorry for failing to see contradictions. (p.67)

Yogadharma never happens / The rocks create their own art in desolation / How can I miss? (p. 68)

He (the perfect man) is a mirror without reflection. / He is a sky with no clouds. (p.73)

The mystique lies in holding / When gulls cannot drink a drop / Humans can hardly predict the events. (76)

All things from the beginning are as they are / Altering the condition is misery (p.78)

In the landscape trees grow natural / While birds make free mating. (p.82)

In the world's nothingness / In the soul's nothingness / Is 'isness' (p87)

Yogadharma is not something what something is happening / It is, what it is. (p.94)

Yogadharma is simply like this un-orchestrated / Phenomenon. (p.97)

The mountain in silence deepens. / Birds are grieving / But the mountain in silence intensifies. (p100)

The conclusion, after saying the whole thing again, is this: "The majestic mountain is calling" has thinned like a wafer and vanished like wisps of smoke that rose from the chimney in distance.

A slow and steady reading of this work places the reader in a contemplative mood needing deep introspection. A Poet Therapist

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Singh, Ram Krishna. Tr. Joseph Berolo. *Tainted with Prayers: Contaminado con Oraciones. (English/Spanish)*. Colombia: Editorial Ave Viajera S.A.S., 2019, Pp. 79. Price US \$ 19.00, ISBN 978-1650109237.

—Varsha Vijay—

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### 5

Prof. Ram Krishna Singh's poems, as they begin with a new hope of bringing time and space to an end from the flames of relentless earthly desires, gently yet powerfully, meander through nooks and crannies of human life. From the first line of every poem, the poet's wit, unfailingly, unleashes the reader into a different plane of existence along the fluid flow of following lines, from where, having tasted the gentlest expressions of the rising star in rebellion against the mundanity till the last drop of dying desires, the traveller reader may have to then reconsider dropping himself down to the mere act of living. The order of the poems by their titles aptly threaded from the new dawn of desires which, intuitively followed by a warning, creatively leads to colours of life, craving for an experience under both the bright and the dark, the warm and the bold at varied angles, to later evoke deeper spiritual insights, bookmarking a brief history for the human life only to ride the reader for an end realization that life is a vicious circle of multiple births and deaths of human perceptions on a gourmet journey.

Poems are best felt when understood raw. It is interesting that the popular beliefs confining translations to raw representations of the original work as to propagate an idea across languages for the mere purpose of interpreting the same, goes significantly irrelevant when an idea originating from a literary piece of work on translation brings to surface, the fondest resonance, in similar lines across the bilingual versions and then kindles the creative perception of the reader sowing seeds for curiosity in multiple directions to form a collage of coupled serious literature each tending to appeal to the culture they uniquely address.

An inquisitive comparison between the English poems and their Spanish



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interpretative translations uncovers the poet/translator's incredible passion towards retaining the essence of the original version while at the same time arriving beyond the interpreted nuance for the creative appeal to the Spanish audience. For instance, in the original poem, no. 6, titled as 'Blasphemy', the seamless poetic expression on the extremities of the world in split of contradictions turning good hopes to finding oneself needless for a change in dismay, is transitioned into Spanish with the apt use of subtle linguistic approaches and this implies crafting of language specific poetic devices to befit a natural flow. From a Spanish reader's point of view, I would say, the exceptional translation helps expose the influence of Eastern culture over the usage of the English language from the West while portraying life within the context of the East, thereby extending the scope of research on the significance of interpretative translations.

The cool style of twisting surprises into uninhabited truth back and forth, interestingly knitted by the word play of R. K. Singh's original version and Joseph Berolo's well paralleled Spanish version, leave the readers with more questions to ask on life for answers to fall on rise. As one among many poetry enthusiasts, I would say, this collection, much as the rest of their creations, leaves lasting imprints on the soul in search of a new world.

\*The Spanish poet-translator Joseph Berolo makes R.K. Singh's poems along with their Spanish translation available on <http://www.aveviajera.org/nacionesunidasdelasletrasuniletras/id1386.html>. Interested readers may like to visit the page for first hand experience of both the original and translation.

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### Tainted With Prayers: A Review

—Robert Best—

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## 6

This is an ambitious collection written by Ram Krishna Singh, an accomplished poet, journalist, writer and academic. It's ambitious in that, according to his own words, "My book is dedicated to a person who recognizes the real truth and has been working for humanity, now under tremendous stress." (I want to ask more about 'the real truth', and who of us, if any, have access to such a treasure, but that would be beyond the bounds of a review such as this).

There are forty poems in this collection, some of which are beautiful, some sober, and some are properly hard-hitting in either political, spiritual or materialistic contexts. In addition, there is a handful of 'micropoems' at the end; though none of these are haiku, they do hint at the authors' self-proclaimed love for,

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and experience with, this form. The last one in the series I found particularly potent;

“end of May-  
scorching heat follows  
rain and hail  
before iftaar this Friday  
prayer promises bliss”

I do want to address something right up front that I did find distracting throughout *Tainted With Prayers*, and that is Singh’s choices around punctuation. For the most part, he uses very little – certainly there’s a paucity of periods and commas, though apostrophes and question marks generally take their proper places. Now, I’ve written poems myself with little or no punctuation; I find it effective in making a poem stand out and it can create deliberate ambiguity with regard to meaning and flow. However, the choice to hardly use any punctuation at all across this entire collection is problematic for two reasons. First, I personally find the minimal punctuation quite exhausting, at times monotonous, and often frustrating because I’m reading and re-reading words that I’m sure are there to convey some deep meaning, but because I can see more than one potential meaning, the power (that I assume is intended) is somewhat lost as a result. Poem 23, Pollution, is a great example;

“Who sees the smoke  
of the thumb-sized flame  
the body burns  
  
the ashes of silence  
float on the holy breast  
tears pollute”

I can read this in a number of ways, punctuating in my head differently each time, and each time getting an entirely different poem. Here’s my Version A;

“Who sees the smoke  
of the thumb-sized flame?  
The body burns.  
  
The ashes of silence  
float on the holy breast;  
tears pollute.”

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Or how about Version B?

“Who sees the smoke  
of the thumb-sized flame  
the body burns?”

The ashes of silence  
float on the holy breast.  
Tears pollute.”

One more?

“Who sees the smoke  
of the thumb-sized flame?”

The body burns  
the ashes of silence.  
Float on the holy breast.  
Tears pollute.”

Which one of these conveys the intended meaning? Do any of them? Are there meant to be multiple meanings hidden herein? Is the original the only valid version to consider? (It is, after all, the one the poet wrote!) Does it even matter?

The second issue with punctuation here is that it's not always consistent. A good example is *Aftermath*, Poem 16, which stands out because it starts with a number of distinct phrases, each closed with a full stop, and this is the first time we see such conventional punctuation;

“Between the mossy and thorned pathways  
shadows slant. He trumps the press and praises PM  
wisdom splashed in gonzo arguments  
cocks the walk. Others too feel his sting but prefer  
silence. They know the caged parrot's free  
to shame seven decades of democracy groomed  
differently.”

Then, without warning, the poem ditches this refreshing shift in style and the last third reverts to a stream of unpunctuated thought, the like of which we see throughout this book;

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“They know how weak they are  
to stop the burning forest’s ash from reddening  
now aberrations clot in the mind  
await Ram’s hanging before the wounded converts  
count the cries, lashes and piercings”

The reader in me sees the ghost of a period after ‘reddening’, and my inner editor itches to end the poem with one, too, after ‘piercings’. The fact they are missing distracts from the poem, rather than adds to it, creating within the piece an unwelcome internal inconsistency. Again, if this was deliberate to create ambiguity and uncertainty, then there would be a reason for it and a logic behind it. Unfortunately, it just comes across as being somewhat slap-dash.

Leaving the punctuation issues to one side now, there are some undoubtedly wonderful pieces here. I love Poem 29, Self neglect, which begins;

“Meditation-  
living long but failing  
to live wide  
says Seneca we are  
fugitives from ourselves”

I could spend a happy evening just contemplating that one verse. Then in Poem 32, Energy block, Singh uses his economic style to powerfully lay out, in relatively few words, some of the downsides of aging;

“things get hairy, scary  
with body failure  
ailments pop up  
spirit dries up  
mind disconnects”

In a beautiful, moving and touchingly humorous close to the book, Poem 40, Profile, reflects on this poets’ non-acceptance in the world of “...back-scratchers / or goody-goody poetic / academia or press” but ends on a triumphant note;

“but long after I’m dead  
buried or burnt to ashes  
I may rise again  
a tiny phoenix mapped in

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fresh DNA of silence  
from google's graveyard"

(Even here, I want to put a comma at the end of the first three lines, capitalise Google, and end with a period. I just can't help myself...)

The Punctuation Problem arises in a third form, for me, in the Micropoems at the end. Since these, too, are largely devoid of punctuation, they appear, at first glance at least, as if they are multiple verses of a single poem, because many of the preceding poems look like this, too.

The collection comes in a bi-lingual format, with the Columbian poet Joseph Berolo expertly translating (or, in his word, interpreting) Singh's poems. I am, alas, a monolingualist, and am therefore unable to review the Spanish versions. Interestingly, in an accompanying piece, Berolo directly addresses the punctuation himself, saying, "...I have been deeply moved by the sensual and spiritual sense of his poetry, his fluidity, free of points and commas, that make it run like water through ritualistic idiomatic sinuosities that sometimes demand explanation, or imagination." What I see (mostly) as a weakness, Berolo sees as a strength – a splendid illustration of the beauty and variety in the ways in which poetry strikes and resonates differently with different people at different times.

Having read through *Tainted With Prayers* a few times now, and jumped around within it while writing this review, I'm left with a sense that I'll be returning to this collection several more times before the month is through. There is clearly a lot going on in some of these pieces, and you would be well advised to spend time with them, allowing them space to simmer and percolate in their own time, and at their own pace.

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### Observations (in a nutshell) on R.K. Singh's "Tainted with Prayers"

—Prof. HS Bhatia—

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#### 7

Undeniably, "Tainted with Prayers" is an outstanding achievement of a mature mind. The most charming aspect of the work is a balance between various binary, contrary forces—inner and outer, within man and outside him, optimism and pessimism, angst and hope, and above all, sensuality and spirituality. The poet is wide awake to all human activities - 24/7, night and day, social, political, economic,

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religious, ritual and individualistic. In spite of certain personal observations, such as in the case of political happenings, there is no effort at propagandizing. Nowhere are the poetic thrust and consummation compromised for creating gallery-playing, impressionistic images. Certain glaring problems that torment mankind in particular, like corruption and pollution, besides terrorism and obscurantism and obstructionism, have been brought under the scanner. Then the work applies both, inductive and deductive methods, that is particular as well as general to be more comprehensible and effective. Finally, it is most conveniently enjoyable by mature minds.

The present collection of poems is a muesli of two collections of poems, 'Hour of Antipathy' (2014) and 'River of Hope' (2017), embellishing 152 pages with 108 poems. A reader is intrigued at the title of the poems. There is a connection between the earlier title 'River of Hope' and the second part of the title in the present collection.

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**Chambial, D.C. *Songs of Sonority and Hope*.  
Authorspress, 2018, pp. 152. Rs. 295/\$ 15.**

—S. A. Hamid—

Professor, poet, translator. He lives in Almora, Uttarakhand, and has four books of poems to his credit, the latest being *The Ontology of Desire: New and Selected Poems*. E-mail: hamidalmora@gmail.com

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### 8

#### A Poet of Modernity and Profundity of Thought

A poet's oeuvre is usually centered on a certain aspect of life; Wordsworth, for instance, made nature his abiding passion, Keats focused on beauty while Browning exhibited his insight into human psychology. Few poets explore life in all its shades—beautiful, ugly, painful, joyful—but all overtopped with sympathy, understanding and human kindness. D. C. Chambial is one such poet. Writing about the poetic process in his latest book of poems, *Songs of Sonority and Hope*, which consists of poems written between 2010 and 2017, he states: "The poetic process is a dream: a poet or an artist stretches the horizon of his imagination to the extent of dreaming such dreams as does not exist in reality but has the possibility to exist," (*Songs* 7). His random thoughts coloured with a fertile imagination present the myriad experiences of life of a man imbued with a sensitive nature and fine sensibility.

Like all poets, Chambial has love for nature, but he is not oblivious to the terrible and furious side of nature. In poems like "Tsunami Memorial, Andaman" he depicts the fury of nature, a Tsunami which leaves behind devastation and loss of

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human lives:

In the belly of starving death  
Never again the world to see  
The ruins reign all, all around  
The air with human cries abounds (*Songs* 76)

In another poem, he likens a stormy wind to a vampire:

Wild wind furious  
after the Spring showers  
the sap sucked to dregs  
as if by the bloody vampire. (“Clouds in the Sky” *Songs* 26)

There are poems in which his description of nature reminds us of Thomas Gray or John Keats. In “The Sun Sings”, he describes each season with sensuous detail reminiscent of Keats:

Spring mellowed with honeyed-breath stirs life:  
A celebration of colours all around;  
Prickly chill left far behind in life’s strife  
To welcome the soft smooth breath that surrounds. (*Songs* 53)

In poems like “The Canvas” (*Songs* 61), he depicts the colours of nature, emphasizing the fact that nature never discriminates among human beings when she showers her blessings on this earth as compared, by implication, to human beings who are bundles of prejudices. In another nature poem, “There Was a Man”, which is, perhaps, inspired by Wordsworth, Chambial laments the loss of primal innocence that proximity with nature gave to man and which has been lost “in the cacophony / of debates futile” (*Songs* 67). This has resulted in the loss of love and the softer feelings of the heart. Similar sadness is expressed in “Where is Gone the Song?” in which he attributes this loss of innocence to “the maelstrom of modernity” (*Songs* 32), which has left man to the pursuit of materialistic gains at the cost of human brotherhood.

In a beautifully crafted sonnet, Chambial reflects upon the condition of contemporary society in which the honest suffer at the hands of clever and crafty people:

The world is afire for true and honest  
Whoever and anon work, God in mind;  
The humanity does them most detest,  
Brands one such, of humanity, poor kind.  
(“So Goes the World” *Songs* 42)

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He also laments at the loss of love in the modern world, where love has been forsaken for material gains at the cost of the cherished values of mutual sacrifice, honesty and brotherhood:

God made Man, they say, in His own image  
Man rebelled, strayed away for doing damage.  
(“Man Prefers Matter” *Songs* 43)

He comes down heavily on such selfish and unscrupulous men, comparing them to wolves, hyenas and jackals; they indulge in debauchery, larceny and treachery to achieve their ends. He is disgusted at the fact that in modern society “love and compassion banished / jealousy and hatred rule the roost” (“We are Living...” *Songs* 51).

Chambial, however, is not a pessimist. He has abiding faith in love and human brotherhood, in the midst of all the negativity that surrounds us in contemporary materialistic society. There is always a spark of hope, a ray of sunlight piercing the dark clouds that hover over the horizon:

Blessed are those with hopes crowned high  
Damned those, whose hopes at ease to play on ground.  
A spark survives in the ashes that fly  
Urging recoiling souls to peaks beyond.  
(“Spark Survives” *Songs* 140)

Hope comes hand in hand with love, which is eternal. It is love that gives a meaning to man’s life, sustains him in times of adversity. Riches may give pleasure to the body, but it is love that nourishes the soul:

Love, a sentiment of oneness:  
comes unknown all at once.  
Known to soul since eternity. (“Love Lasts Eternity” *Songs* 109)

Finally, in the title poem of the volume, he reposes faith in the age old belief that whenever the world is in the grip of falsities, exploitation and sins, a new revolution, a new hope takes birth:

Revolutions result  
from ruins of mansions great and powers high.  
The grass soaked in blood stirs from slumber;  
picks up the reed and sings with wind’s fury  
A new song of sonority and hope.  
(“Song of Sonority and Hope” *Songs* 147)



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D. C. Chambial, like any other modern or contemporary poet, voices his disillusionment with human beings, who have scant respect for the age old values of faith, love and brotherhood, which they have sacrificed at the altar of Mammon. He presents his anguish through striking but homely images which immediately strike a chord in the hearts of the readers. Like Robert Frost, beneath the simplicity of his familiar images lurk symbols that strike us with their immediacy. He is a poet of modern sensibility but with a simplicity that accounts for his profundity of thought and depth of feeling.

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**Tripathi, Jayshree Mishra. *What Not Words: Short Stories Set in India and the Diaspora.* Authors Press, 2020. ISBN 978-93-89615-14-2. Pp. 117. 295/\$ 15 (HB).**

—U Atreya Sarma—

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The author “Jayshree Misra Tripathi lived a nomadic lifestyle from 1986 till 2015, as the wife of a career foreign service officer in the Indian Civil Service.” Besides other qualifications, she is an MA (English Literature). In all, she has authored four books.

*What Not Words* is “a selection of impressions – from life in 1950s in India, till the year 2000, then travel through the Indian diaspora” (Blurb). They also include diplomatic reminiscences. It is “a tapestry of events, woven with reminiscences (*sic*) from different cultures, including my own homeland India” (Preface) is what informs the book.... “The narrator’s voice mutates to other characters, in some tales, to underscore the dilemmas we often face in Life. Not all issues are resolved, even after critical crises, or a reversal of fortune, nor do the deuteragonists or minor characters develop within the story” (Preface).

The book contains 11 stories with an “experimental structure” (Preface) under 3 sections – ‘Tales From Long Ago,’ ‘Tales From The Diaspora,’ and ‘And So, Dear Reader, As We Near The End...’.

The 5 stories in the section ‘Tales From Long Ago’ are about the family relationships and they come from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are “the themes of love and transformation. The loves are those of struggle, regulation and

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pain, but also celebration, with the power to heal deep wounds” (Opinions, Prof Neloufer de Mel, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka). And Dr Radhika Coomaraswamy, former UN Special Reporter, VAW observes, “I have often met similar women who have experienced tragedy, bereavement and violence but who regain their faith in humanity because their personalities are full of love and caring” (Opinions).

The 3 stories in section ‘And So, Dear Reader, As We Near The End...’ are “set in East Africa, Madagascar and Sri Lanka” and “based on actual incidents” (Opinions).

### **Tales From Long Ago**

There is a young semi-educated widow with two little children to bring up. Reluctant to vegetate in the shadow of the earning males of the joint family and eat out of their hand, valuing self-respect and yearning to be financially independent, she swims against the tide, turns into a seamstress and educates her children well. This is in a milieu where women didn’t have much independence, relatively speaking. The story also reflects the inevitable differences in merit and attitude among the siblings though brought up in a same atmosphere. Finally, what happens to the family, you have to unfold the suspense yourself, dear reader.

Senior teenagers including those who have glided into their early 20s are normally in a transitional stage of mental maturity. While boys tend to be assertive and have their own way even in matters of love and marriage and can try their best to convince or even defy the elders; girls tend to be the exactly opposite. This submissiveness sometimes could lead to compromises (though not all compromises could turn out to be bad) or even fatal consequences.

We are given a window on a love triangle wherein a Jezebel dominates it at the expense of the legitimate wife’s emotional turbulence. The incompatibility between the spouses has its effect on the children as well who get to form their own unverified opinions about their parents.

In a family where there is no understanding but only a cold war between the spouses, the following incidents would be the order of the day:

“He has not uttered more than two full sentences of approximately six words apiece for the whole day... He has not cared to listen to her for years now...” (34), though both of them live within the same four walls. “...the love they once shared... gradually festered... into intense detachment, bordering upon intolerance” (35). And “She was thoroughly fed up of the monotony of being a housewife... She wanted to be appreciated for the little things, the finer things, but he seemed so oblivious to her sentiments” (35).

In such chronic cases where the partners totally withdraw into themselves, the TV (and nowadays the mobile phone/iPad/Tab) comes to their rescue as the

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only amenable companion. The wife and the husband living in their own separate worlds own “two TVs with two separate channel controls. They did not need each other to converse with, to interact with” (36). Thus “Cable TV was the winner” (36). But sometimes, finally if good senses prevail on either of them, he/she takes the initiative of breaking the ice. Whether it works or not, it’s a different matter.

We come to know, how the good number of Indians that emigrated to East Africa more than two centuries ago braved it out in an entirely different foreign milieu, worked hard across generations and made it good. Hear how it happened, in the words of an Indian origin East African lady: “You know, my grandfather used to ride a bicycle and go very far to sell things. It was hard work. Very hard work. He was poor. But my father built a 25-room house on the coast. God is great” (43). And this particular lady “signs \$150,000 cheques as donations” (43) at charitable auctions. Beauty lies in sharing, isn’t it?

In an atmosphere where many an influential person tries to sound out the diplomats for inside information or extract a favour, even the wives of diplomats are supposed to ingrain diplomacy, tact and political correctness. With good education and talents, the wives of the diplomats do channelize their accomplishments. They “rally forth on subjects that are non-political, yet truly close to my heart: the education of children from economically challenged families, literacy of adult women...” (44).

Like every rose has a thorn, the prosperous Indian origin Africans, not infrequently, become a target of the ethnic rebellious youngsters who kidnap them for a ransom or even murder them.

We also come to know of a protocol nicety that an Indian diplomat from Indian Foreign Service is described as a “Distinguished Citizen of India” by the President of India in the credentials to be presented to a foreign President or Head of State.

The story with a Sri Lankan background is aptly titled “One Afternoon in Serendipity,” for the word ‘Serendipity’ (meaning, ‘The faculty or fact of making fortunate discoveries by accident’) comes from the Persian ‘Sarandip’ which in turn comes from the Sanskrit ‘Simhala Dweepa.’ The writer gives us a glimpse of history which clarifies that though “Labourers had been brought to Ceylon in 1827, “Traders from India had first come ashore Ceylon in the second century BC” (48). The writer rues how “this beautiful exotic land, once called Serendipity” (49) has occasionally come to be bloodied with robberies and assassinations. Of course, such incidents are not confined to any particular country; they happen all over in one measure or the other. And she has a word of praise for the “socialites in Colombo” with their “witty and fun loving” nature and they “dress elegantly in western attire or their *sarees*, which are tied differently from their Indian sisters, with not a pleat out of place. The *pallu* hangs below the knees, held in place with an heirloom brooch,

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studded with rubies, pearls and sapphires, shimmering hues of splendour. Serendipity is renowned for its precious and semiprecious stones” (49-50).

How youngsters from low-income groups have to labour hard, right from their teens and in the course of time their own experience becomes their teacher or motivator; they want their own small pleasures, fall into love and want to marry. But they are obliged to sacrifice their personal interests for the sake of the families they come from.

On the accent of one’s language, the writer has a word of wisdom. After all the accent of our language is a product of our brought-up and environment; it’s no offence to have a particular accent, so no one should mock others’ accents (43).

And we have a story in the setting of Madagascar, “the fourth largest island in the world” (60) where “Indian traders arrived... in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mainly from the western coast of Gujarat” (60). It “was uninhabited until two thousand years ago” and “The first settlers came from Indonesia and Malaysia” (60). But for the “worrisome” and “unusual political unrest” at the given time, “Madagascar is a peaceful country and its people the nicest you can imagine” (57). Because of the prevailing political turmoil, the lives of the narrator’s family hang on a Damocles’ sword.

And we come across an interesting local custom – “the *Famadihana*, the turning of the bones, an ancient ritual that is a second burial. Held every ten years, the bones are taken out from the grave and wrapped in new hand-woven silk, called *lamba*.” This curious ritual involves a sacrifice (*zebu*), taboos (*fady*) and regulations. “There must be no silence during this ancestral worship” and they believe in “destiny, *Vintana*, like our Indian *Karma*” (62).

We have an eerie tale of cryptic espionage developments involving a Somalia based Indian diplomat and an executive from the Research and Analysis Wing with incredible and elusive twists and turns.

And there are a few hilarious moments with a wanton mix up of ‘Oriya’ and ‘Orissi’ and a play on the word ‘abroad’ during the course of ragging in Delhi University (73-74). We also witness friendships of various types, antics of one-upmanship, streaks of jealousies and the attitudinal differences due to different economic levels of the students during their school and college lives (84-86).

The annual get-togethers of school/college alumna present us a glittering parade of ‘divas’ with all their idiosyncrasies, peccadilloes, jealousies and snobberies. Some of them don’t display any mental maturity but continue with their earlier streak of jealousies and back-biting. And some of them remain as pure as gold.

Joint families breaking into nuclear families is no longer a strange phenomenon, for in the contemporary life, the members in quite a number of nuclear families have

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become a separate unit of themselves each living in a different place or country with their own disparate tastes and values.

Besides the glitter at the cosmetic level of the upper crust of society, we have a touch of philanthropy and spirit of sacrifice and service lacing some of the stories. The stories may not be sublimating, but isn't it the fact of life, for life is polygonal? Also the stories, at least some of them, may not be having the usual sensations, suspense, crisis, climax, catharsis and denouement. Most of them, in fact, come off as a gallery of caricatures or individual characters... Yet the book has its charm with a mix of the exotic and the indigenous. Hats off to the writer Jayshree for the offbeat conceptualisation.

(Reviewer's Note: A shorter version of this review has been sent to 'Indian Literature')

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***The Sun Still Shines* by O. P. Arora. Gurugram - 122002 (Haryana). The Poetry Society of India. Pb. Pp. RRP: 210.00, US\$21. ISBN: 978-93-89213-11-9.**  
***Songs of Sonority and Hope: A Collection of Poems: 2010-2017* by D. C. Chambial. Authors Press, New Delhi, India. (2018). RRP: R.295 / \$15. Pb. 152pp. ISBN: 978093-87651-23-4.**

—Patricia Prime—

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**P. Arora** is a poet, novelist and short story writer. He has published seven volumes of poetry and three novels in English, as well as two books in Hindi - one, a novel, the other, a collection of short stories.

*The Sun Still Shines* contains a lively selection of poems. Arora is a plain-speaking poet. His is a generalized world, stripped of specificity. His language is simple, his poems bare yet deceptive. His poetic insight lends the book a spare tone that attempts to say much with very little on the subjects of words, anguish, the night, Greta, loneliness and fires, as in the poem "Fires": "Man gets a breather / and goes about thoughtlessly, to create more fires . . ." (15). Arora speaks about the young woman activist, Greta, in his poem of that name:

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When Greta / with an anguished soul  
determined eyes  
her face red-hot with the pain of seven billion  
in a shaking voice  
lashed out at the Lords of the World  
How dare you? (19)

Sometimes the poems are an overt criticism of society as in “World Environment Day”:

Shame on you / you demon!  
You gangrape the Mother-earth  
inexorably exploit her meek submission  
impervious to her sobs and suffocation  
ungrateful wretch! You mistook her compassion . . . (36)

Whilst this produces work laden with metaphor and ulterior meanings, other poems are about personal relationships, as we see in “What Else”:

She came with cake and coke / a smile too  
a bewitching smile indeed . . . / I was bewitched . . . (38)

However, in “They Couldn’t Believe”, his straightforwardness accumulates and underlies an urgency surrounding “slavery”, and his concern for the oppressed. A poem like this shows its workings, how it gets from one point to another. Here is the poem in its entirety:

No  
they couldn’t believe / a slave  
wearing slavery on his sleeves  
addicted to licks and kicks  
spineless Yes and Nos  
surviving on abuses and leftovers  
could dare look them  
in their arrogant, fiery eyes  
ask them for his rights —  
rights of being human . . . (47)

In “The Big Question” (51), the concern is not for evolution, pollution,

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environmental balance, etc., but for “the ever-growing menace of mosquitoes”.

A poem entitled “Lost Souls” (57) considers a party where “Naked, half-naked bodies / swinging their hips and breasts” wait to get noticed. Fittingly, his concern for others is exhibited in many poems. In “Memory Box”:

The brain of the mad sage  
Smashed in the road rage —  
He used to place happiness in everybody’s cage  
Ahed and ohed everybody, youth or age . . . (60)

It is for a “mad sage”; in “WhatsApp” (62), it is for someone glued to his laptop; and in “Destiny’s Playthings”, it is for crossed lovers:

Shall we ever talk? / shall we ever meet?  
Or / We too shall fall / to Destiny’s design  
and lose / our only chance / to savour life . . . (64)

Written in simple phrases and stanzas, “Only You”, is a key achievement. A cinematic experience which blends a plain-speaking voice with a fully imagined world. The poem ends:

The child / laughs at me  
when I open my eyes . . .  
Only you / neither divinity  
nor man / only you  
can blot those dark stains (68)

“The Wild Forest”, is a lengthy poem about a walk in the New Forest, where the poet encounters a mysterious, devilish woman:

Walking  
through the wild forest  
only wildest passion . . .  
  
The New Forest  
among the wild, wildest  
fantastic, starred the best . . .  
  
Al day I walked through  
every path, every lane, every tree  
mesmerised, I felt free  
interacting with every bough . . . (73)

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The final poem, “God is about to Ring the Bell”, begins:

Duping me / once again  
with your shameless  
ten to one game . . .  
You simply baffle me.  
Did I create you?  
Oh, Stupid me! (82)

Part-metaphorical biography of the times, part foray into an imaginative other world, *The Sun Still Shines* is an exciting and alarming book. Arora is a myth-maker dramatizing his historical present into poems that are historically aware. Real persons and places are invested with allusion; a world exists behind the visible world. In our world of alternate facts, fake news and inconsistent reporting, Arora’s merging of the factual and the dream-like, presents us with a powerful and more trustworthy record of what it means to be alive in today’s world.

### 11

D. C. Chambial is retired from the education service after about 38 years of service. He has won several awards for his poetry from India and abroad. *Songs of Sonority and Hope* is a collection of his poems from 2010 to 2017. In his Introduction: “Poetry, Memory and Dream”, he writes:

The poems so presented, in this volume, are the result of both memory and dream/imagination as experienced and realized in their creation(s). The personality of the artist is lost in the cyclone of his imagination and what remains is rock-solid and heavy matter called text that settled down as a poem or work of art for the amusement and deliberation for the posterity to conduct experiments for the gravimetric analysis of the constituent elements to ascribe their percentage. (7)

The poems are divided into two sections: “Hour of Antipathy” (2014) and “River of Happiness” (2017). The poems are followed by “Some Opinions” from various poets from India and elsewhere.

*Songs of Sonority and Hope* gives us the best of D. C. Chambial, mining the rich seams of his years of writing poetry. His is one of the deepest and most enigmatic voices. To be profound and accessible is this poet’s talent, and he shares this talent with us in language that sings. The collection opens with “Temple” (17) and straight away we are introduced to his skill, coupled with his lyricism and control of structure and metre:



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I look at the ridge,  
where once sat the temple  
thatched like a hut.  
A red flag on bamboo pole  
made known its existence  
far and wide, waved sanctity  
to those who came in obeisance  
seeking blessings.

It is essential for a poem to have “life” – meaning energy, vitality and the ability to intellectually stimulate and Chambial’s poetry is teeming with life. Take “An Escapade”, quite a long poem that grips us from the start and carries us through a narrative that is threaded with the poet’s gift for directness, wonder and subtle humour. It begins with this verse:

Once young and old went to play together  
under the big old banyan tree to make  
the most of their time at their disposal  
during the sunny day of their life prime. (20)

The poem, “Clouds in Sky” (26) is a simple five-stanza poem about the weather. I like the scenarios the poet sets up. At the end of the poem we see what happens to the earth after a devastating storm:

Earth turned black,  
cries for a drop like *papiha*  
to wet the dried throat  
in this cruel hour of antipathy.

Chambial has a natural and powerful spiritual or psychological curiosity, which he clearly delights in exercising. But his explorations are never tedious or long-winded: he revels in the possibilities of discipline – in form, line, rhythm – to produce precision. He uses this precision to favourable effect in the poem “Butterflies in Wizen Skies” (33) – a sequence describing a brazen hearted woman. That can address such a contentious subject without a shadow of subjectivity – with an observer’s eye – and with power – is wonderful. Threat, dread, danger are held in delicate balance. In the following verse is a wonderful description of the woman:

She – a desert  
without hope,

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winterless, grey,  
scorched, ashen,  
hanging by the evening sun  
on the mountain top  
looking into the wizened sky  
counting the lost stars. (34)

The poems in this first section of the book fuse Chambial's lyrical gifts with his contemplation of the physical's relationship with the spiritual. Chambial's flights of imagination, his accessibility and humour, make the poems fulfilling to read.

The second section of later poems begins with "Strife – The Leitmotif" (*A tribute to fishermen*) (87):

Strife, the leitmotif of life  
Goes on  
In sun and shade,  
Dark and light:  
Rainbows,  
Of hopes, dreams  
And holistic haul.

Chambial has a natural and persistent spiritual or psychological curiosity which he clearly delights in exercising. But his explorations are never tedious or long-winded.

He revels in the possibilities of discipline – in form, line, rhythm – to produce precision. He uses discipline to devastating effect in the poem describing the Hindu world in "Durgastami" (91):

The Hindu world  
Celebrates last Navaratri  
After having worshipped  
The indomitable feminine power  
In various manifestations  
As the destroyer of various demons  
The cause of endless sorrows,  
Tortures, and sufferings  
To the holy, humane, and the human,

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That he can address such a subject with his lyrical gifts and his contemplation of the spiritual is fascinating. In “Divine Bliss” (94), a rhyming poem, he tells us how he lies under a tree, relaxing, contemplating, bearing no malice to anyone:

Here I recline under a shady tree,  
With my mind on a vacant spree,  
Seek solace at the feet of the Lord,  
Not to let my mind any malice hold.

Wonderful! Here is a persona immersed in the beauties of the world. In the long poem “Spring” (98), we enter a delightful scenario:

The spring comes with its beauty  
Full of colours and scents  
To bedeck the Earth:  
Nature stirs the slumbering *Kama*  
In each individual  
From her wintery sleep.

This poem prompts in me the wonders of spring: new growth, scents and colours, refreshing rain and bird song. The poem is laced with lightness, a celebration of the season. “While Plucking Tea Leaves” (104) is a poem that combines elegance and imaginative humility, as we read of the poet going about in the garden:

After a gap of one month  
Picked up the bamboo basket  
To pluck tea-leaves  
From the plants beyond  
The kitchen garden.

In “River of Happiness” and “Blue Bells” we are led into a broken world, a parallel existence, which is nevertheless compellingly familiar to the world we live in, endure and come to accept. Here we witness in the first poem “a dead tree”, the desert and a lone spectator, and in the second “blood and bones”, a weeping rainbow, jackals and dogs. We see for real, spectacles of nature. “Hearts Sunk to Abysmal Abyss” (126) is an eight-verse poem in which the gods come together to wreak havoc on mankind. The poem ends with this verse:

The nature’s ire, when it descends,  
On the haughty men and their selfishness;  
All are left with their eyes tearless  
And their hearts sunk to abysmal abyss.

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The lengthy poem “GMG: The Man of Allah” (128) contains twenty verses. The poet tells us in a footnote that the poem was written after the poet had read a story in the newspaper. I quote the first two verses, which lay the foundation for the story:

There’s the river named by the name of Jhelum.  
It flows through the paradise of the earth.  
A place, Rajbagh, on the riverside, a berth.  
Situated on the bank of Jhelum.  
  
It is a place full of heavenly beauty.  
The man lived in Shikara, none other:  
His family, none: save of his brother.  
He looked after them well as his duty.

*Songs of Sonority and Hope* collects the best of the poet’s work from recent years. From poems about memories, experiences, dreams and imagination, through history, nature, human nature and insights into humanity, the guiding voice here is vintage Chambial: clear, incisive, intelligent, personal.\*\*\*

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**Rajamouly, Katta. *Smart Child: A Novel on Child Psychology*. Jaipur, India: Yking Books, 2019.**

**Pp. 161 . Rs. 399/-**

**Rajamouly, Katta. *Post Gandhian Days: Woodland Streams: Short Stories: My First Anthology*. New Delhi, India: Authorpress, 2016. Pp.238 . Rs. 595/- \$30**

**Dwivedi, Poonam. *Feminine Fragrance and Other Poems*. New Delhi, India: Authorpress, 2020. Pp. 169. Rs. 395/ \$ 20**

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The title, *Smart Child: A Novel on Child Psychology*, is beguiling. The first line of the ‘Foreword’ explains: “*Smart Child* is a novel that portrays the psychology of

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children and adolescents including the elders who suffer for no fault of theirs”. ‘Background to the Novel’ that follows is a spoiler. It summarizes the whole story leaving nothing to look forward to. The inspiration for the story, according to the author, is drawn from a story he heard during a train journey: “I felt sorry, hearing the story the woman [who had left her husband] narrated to the old woman. What I understood was that the woman was very adamant and arrogant. The pitiable looks of the child made me realize her internal suffering, a story dawned in my mind like a stream in a speedy flow and waited for my pen to gush for its narration” (xiv). A wife, Shasi, who refused to adjust with her consort, Prithvi, for the sake of the child is the villain of the story—the one who goes through a sudden change of heart in the last two pages of the book. Rajamouly writes in the second last paragraph of ‘Background to the Novel’ (xvi): “Prithvi fails to get correct information about Shasi and her family especially her father, Vittarjan [the Super-villain, the rich showoff and the master-mind who marries his only daughter for personal gains] and faces agony for no fault of his. The child [Manvita] who is no way responsible also suffers [the suffering of the child here becomes secondary]. The novel comes to close with a happy note” (xvi). The story, the theme, the shallow psychological agony starts to appear redundant and boring even before the beginning of the novel. This is followed by ‘Introduction of the Writer’ (xvii to xxv). The plethora of work and the author’s versatility leaves you dumbfounded.

The novel is divided into twenty chapters. The first chapter—again repeats the story narrated by the woman in the train and the author in the ‘Background to the Novel’ but this time adorning a new garb—a movie named *Smart Child*—the story is more or less the same only the name of the characters change. Shasi becomes Sriguna, Prithvi becomes Sridhar and Manvita is Vajra. Author explains the children being seated in the movie theatre with the prowess of a reporter:

Before the starting of the picture, *Smart Child*, there started the National Anthem and all viewers stood up as a mark of respect towards the nation. Then all took their seats when the national anthem was over. Then there was a newsreel about the saplings for plantation and growing them with all loving care and concern in our surroundings for ecological balance and natural excellence. There was an ad of Boost for strength in growing children. There was another ad on prohibition of smoking. Children were least interested in newsreels and ads that day [So usually children are interested in such things! And are the readers interested?]. They were very curious for the picture to start immediately. The most aspired time came for the picture to start without any further delay [?]” (3).

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As expected the story takes a backseat in a vehicle driven by social messages. Furthermore, observe the 'so called' psychology of the child being expressed in the first chapter:

“The children at the most reputed Bapuji High School ...were excited to listen to the news that the movie of children, *Smart Child* would be released on 14<sup>th</sup> November. Every child likes the message oriented movie [Okay!!!] and recommends it for the Oscar award” (1).

And later

“The next day the children in the school were in the hilarious mood as they were going to watch the block-buster movie, *Smart Child*...It was the day for the picture, *Smart Child* to be released....Their minds were filled with the anxiety of watching their favourite movie” (2).

The author confuses the names of the reel-life and real-life characters in his story on page 12 of the chapter. After reading the first chapter (which is fraught with repetitions of the plot and the emotions associated with the characters) one feels the story should have ended here. Here it would be the time to say that it is a short story forcibly extended into a novel.

Moreover observe the conversation between the smart child, Manvita, and her classmate after watching the movie in chapter two:

‘I was inspired by her [Vajra’s] role that is the title role [?]. She is my role model...my guide...my compass...my mentor...my hero and heroine...my ideal child...my beacon light to direct me in my life’, said Manvita. .... ‘What you have said is right. The path you have chosen is right... You can proceed with your mission’, said Priya.

‘My father is everything for me...I cannot sleep unless and until I see my dear father... It is a clear sign of my love for him’, said Manvita firmly (16).

Later Manvita’s classmate Divya chimes in:

‘You [Manvita] have won many prizes like the smart child, Vajra in the movie...You are lucky to have unsurpassed intelligence and win many prizes. In that, you will be able to be free from recalling your father for being happy [?]....Just think of your prizes in all the competitions and your marks in all the examinations which other have not got, and be happy as you are unrivalled not only in our class but also in the in our [sic] school...’, said Divya

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who got the lowest rank in the class.

'I give away all my prizes to you... Will you give me my father...? For a daughter, her father is more affectionate than her mother... I want my father... only my father... nothing else... no body else...', said Manvita. (16)

Keeping in view that all these above dialogues take place among the students of second class, it would be safe to infer that not only Manvita but even her classmates are also pretty smart. The perception and understanding of the deeper meaning of things—not improbable yet difficult to digest—belie their ages.

In the end of the chapter, Manvita says, giving her father's description to a newspaper manager, requesting him to publish an advertisement in the newspaper in order to locate her 'missing' father: "What I know about my father is his only name [?] as his name is recorded in my progress report ... Apart from his name I can say that he is tall. He has smiling face ... I can say that he is a software engineer as he studied engineering..." (19). Prithvi, the father also pines over her daughter but one wonders why he never goes to the court. He is shown staying separately from his own parents (a bewildering antinomy)—though serving his parents by staying with them was one of the prime reasons why he did not agree to live with his wife, at his affluent in-laws' home.

In conclusion, the novel is an overdose of redundancy, cloying feelings, unnecessary noun and adjective clauses, and repetitiveness. The statement and the restatement of the obvious continue to annoy throughout the novel. All said and done, the mission is accomplished—one more book with a beautiful cover and an impressive title is added to the shelf with the author's name on it.

### 13

Prof. Rao writes in the 'Foreword' to Prof. Katta's first anthology: "Short Stories are being told from the beginning of time and genesis of the world. Some of them are mere story-telling, some of them provide entertainment and a few of them convey a message or point a moral. The present collection belongs to the last category. The author condemns the drastic decline in the value system as a Post-Gandhian phenomenon" (11). Keeping in mind the above categorization of short story, I wonder in what category do Aesop's tales, the Panchatantras and the Jataka tales fall! I still remember 'Thirsty Crow' and 'Greedy Dog' though having read it many years back. They are epitome of pure and simple (mere) stories of entertainment and moralization. These stories are permanent. Their relevance is universal and eternal. Can the same be said about the stories of Prof. Katta written with a sole mission to rectify the wrong in the society? Rao further says: "By making each short story stories [?] in this collection deal with a particular social evil, it looks as though Dr.

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Rajamouly has deliberately stepped into the role of an agent for a social change. I appreciate his missionary zeal in trying to spread Gandhian values to counter the moral degradation. The youth particularly the students should drive maximum benefit by reading books like this” (12).

The eighteen stories are summarized in the ‘Preface’ (13-20)—as I said on my review on the author’s novel, *Smart Child*—leaving nothing much to look forward to. The main flaw, I feel, is the way in which the dialogues are written—we just know what the characters are going to say and how they are going to say it! Consider the following lines from the first story that promotes communal harmony and condemns communal prejudice:

The first convict came forward and introduced himself with a profound feeling:

“I’m Shyam, a devoted Hindu and son of Radhe Shyam. When I found injustice done to some Hindus, I instigated my followers to set fire to the houses of the wrong-doers.”

The second convict introduced himself with unique gestures of his own, saying:

“I’m Saleem, a son of Abdul Kareem. I adore my religion. I found the houses of some Muslims choked with fire and ash. They’ve become unsheltered and are now living in the shade of all trees [?]. I reacted forthwith to provoke my supporters to molest the daughters of the culprits.”

The third appeared on the scene of introduction and expressed his deeply felt feelings:

“I’m Solomon, a true Christian, son of George Samuel. No doubt, I’m a staunch supporter of my own religion. People talk of secularism everywhere but they’re never secular and there is no secularism in realty [sic]. Is it not hypocrisy on their part? In my case I’ve no pretensions. I respond as a true Christian when my religionists were deceived. On my advice, my people brutally killed our enemies, the culprits.” (30)

The story is clearly inspired by the much acclaimed 1977 Hindi movie: ‘Amar, Akbar Anthony’. And why not the simpler version of the story (mine—first draft and I don’t intend to finalize it):

‘It was the time when the city of lord Krishna was burning with communal riots, police managed to capture the three main masterminds behind the furore and put them in jail. As fate would have it, Bhasha, a child abductor and a jail inmate for years,



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happened to recognize the three as none other than the children he had kidnapped and had sold out to their prospective buyers: all three were seeds of the same plant—they were long separated brothers. When Basha revealed the secret of their birth to them they came to their sense and realized the importance of staying united despite the respective differences in their upbringing as a Hindu, a Muslim and a Christian. Life gave them a second chance and the period of their sentence was condoned. The garlanded statue of Mahatma Gandhi, in the middle of the jail compound, stood smiling as the three stepped out of the jail gate holding hands on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October’.

Well having said that I would not take the risk of sounding redundant by quoting from rest of the book. Moreover, my views would remain more or less the same as stated above in my review on Katta’s *Smart Child*. Let the readers of Prof. Katta be the true judges! God bless!

### 14

“A woman has numerous aspects not even countable by the Creator, but still masculine mind as well as feminine sensibilities explore and implore respectively to sense the scent of woman, the ascent of a female, and the advent of feminism. The title poem (‘Feminine Fragrance’ [1]) of my second anthology (the book in hand) has been composed in positivity delineating various facets of her personality” (xxxiii) says **Poonam Dwivedi** in the ‘Preface’. It has a ‘Foreword’ penned by Dr. K. V. Dominic and an ‘Introduction’ by R. K. Bhushan Sabharwal. Pages 1 to 85 cover fifty poems followed by a section titled ‘Critical Overviews’— pages 85 to 160. It contains articles written by nine renowned writers: P. C. K. Prem, Dr. B. M. Bhalla, Dr. Vikram Chopra, Dr. D. C. Chambial, Aju Mukhopadhyay, Prof. C. L. Khatri, Dr. Manas Bakshi, Dr. Kailash Chander and Dr. Dalip Khetarpal. The last part, pages 161 to 169, has a collection of ‘Critical Opinions’ expressed by Dr. Basavaraj Naikar, Dr. Arbind Kumar Choudhary and Dr. Jernail S. Anand.

The “positivity” (xxxiii) Dwivedi talks about seems more like a justification, mellowing down all the pain and anger of a woman who has been kept in forced confinement in the man-made cage for ages now. She asseverates in her first poem (mentioned above):

Feminine fragrance not to be  
bottled like jasmine,  
Not to be feudalized to be  
covered from top to toe,

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Not to be idolized as  
Winsome deity of the masculine,  
But seldom to be adored as  
the better-half in life's discipline. (40-47)

The alliteratively and the assonantly conveyed message is clear: A woman has been taken for granted, but not anymore!

The poem, 'When the Woman Shall Feel Secure?' (3), is a long one, listing the atrocities which have been incurred by the women since civilized *Homo sapiens* roamed the earth.

After breaking the  
oval door open....  
Falling on the mother earth  
to live a crony life,  
In hell of insecurities....(1-5)

A lot of topics are touched: female foeticide to infanticide, "honour killing", rape, role of a "trophy-wife", being a daughter of a drunkard father, victim of dowry system and many more: umpteen insecurities at home and the outside world.

In 'Woman in Life's Circus' (7), one meets a woman trying to solve the puzzle of life—being a living being is challenging enough and being a human of the second gender is far more challenging and even tougher. (On a personal note, I can't even begin to imagine the woes of LGBT: unimaginably delirious!)

'Am I love-Lorn or Lost in Some Affair?' (11) and 'Am I overwhelmed within—to be You?' (13) are self-exploratory poems. Cambial comments on the latter poem in his article in the book, 'Feminine Fragrance & Other Poems: An Overview' (115), thus: "'You'—it has varied collocations like that of a lover, Almighty, the Creator and seat of all wisdom, a friend, and so on...She [the poet] surrenders before this 'You': 'You are my intoxication, my gratification,' and she feels "overwhelmed within—to be you"' (116). The poem is in one breath—sensuous, philosophical, and spiritual.

There are many other beautiful poems that need special mention: 'The Patriarchal Woman' (15): the poet paints the perseverant, tenacious nature of a woman and challenges the society to "change" Her "nomenclature!": "Throttling the manifest Nature/To boomerang in your farcical face!" (17). Poems such as 'Matrimonial Gift' (81), 'The Democrat Man' (84) and 'Man's Spit Spite' (85) convey the same notion.

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Some poems are not directly feminine: “To Be Humanized Melting-Pot” (57). Dwivedi uses the last lines of this poem in her preface, seeking more freedom as a creator of sonorous humane thoughts: that a transient being creates aspiring eternity through them:

Let me rise life a vapour  
To be spectrum of Rainbow-Thought  
Let me submerge in the Seven-Oceans  
To become humanized melting-pot. (7-10)

Exploring every aspect of feminism and imploring it has been the apparent aim of Dwivedi’s second anthology—has she achieved it? The mere need to explore and implore proves that discrimination exists and thus, the need to explore and implore. Her attempts deserve adulation and her sincerity as a poet is axiomatic. Poonam Dwivedi is poet of immense promise. And more power to this young poet! She has the potential to be the voice of modern feminism where ‘so-called’ equality between man and woman is not enough. It is the need to recognize the *fragrance of feminism* that has the tendency to linger on amidst the stale stench of stagnant, stoic notions.

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***Heart Raining the Lights: Poems composed at  
Jhargram, Kolkata and beyond* by Jaydeep Sarangi.  
www.cyberwit.net. Pp. 91. Price: Rs 200/- ISBN:  
9788194348559.**

—Dr Arti Chandel—

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### 15

Sarangi’s poetry collection ‘*Heart Raining the Lights: Poems composed at Jhargram, Kolkata and beyond*’ contains seventy eight poems in all. Most of the verses are short pieces of poetry passionately articulating the poet’s concern and his point of view on various issues, both personal and public. What fascinates the reader the most is the imagery of these compositions. It appears as if Nature has come alive through the phraseology of these poems with all its rhythmicality and musicality, simplicity and complexity, and humility and grandeur. Human emotions are uttered through Nature and its components. There is juxtaposition of contradictory ideas in the verses and very first poem illustrates it. “Travelling with My Poems” (9) is the title of the opening poem of this book, where the poet first informs the reader that he

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knows his “poems will be alone”, because he thinks that there will be no one to read them, neither men nor women. But then the poet confesses that readers are his “runners” and his poems are like kites flying higher in the sky. Perhaps, the poet expresses the truth that there are not much people to read his poetry, but the few that he has, are enough to understand the poet and are in fact his “soul makers”. Similarly, the poem “Relationship” (34) talks about the ruins of time and distance to a relationship.

The style of Sarangi’s poetry is conversational, as one sees in the poem “Truth”, where the poet describes “truth” as a human, personifying it and declaring that he has neither seen it nor met it, because it was nowhere to be found in present times, but, at one point of time, it was alive and very much available for everyone: “once it was a season”, but “now, a fallen dead stone”. Earlier in the poem, truth seemed to be a person, but later on the poet described it as a season. Thus, the poem abounds in imagery and is written as if the poet converses with another human or himself.

The poem “An Old Clock” again brings out the ironical relationship of the flow of time and human control and power, as time flows relentlessly and ceaselessly in a set pattern. It is not possible even for the “tycoons” to stop the “black hands” of time. The irony and satire, here is quite visible and clear. There is powerful portrayal of the fact that life is full of contradictions, in fact, everything is in between the binaries, self-contradictory and paradoxical in nature. In “Dulung Moment”, the poet focuses that life is nothing but preparation for death and death anticipates life, hence he writes: “All I carry in my veins, I / prepare my arrow each day”. Again in “Poetry” same binaries are captured when the poet claims: “I need your presence and absence / all those things to touch and leak”. Similarly, “Counting Your Absences” is a beautifully romantic poem (of course, romantic in a different way), where the poet-protagonist waits for his beloved’s arrival, but as usual only her absence arrives and she doesn’t, hence her presence is absent again.

These verses seem simple outwardly, but attract the reader with their sheer simplicity and brevity. These poems offer a complex and complicatedly wider and vaster world the moment readers engage and engross themselves, yet these compositions never tend to lose their melody and sweetness, pictorial imagery and emotional profundity. This verse collection is worth reading.

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Mishra, Binod & Narinder K. Sharma. *Renaissance of Nativity: Contemporary Indian Literature in English*. Adhyayan Publishers & Dustributors, pp. 234, Rs 1250.

Peeran, S.L. *Glass House: Short Stories, Articles and Poems*. Authors Press, 2020 (Revised and enlarged). Pp. 380. Rs. 700.00/\$ 35.00. ISBN 978-93-89615-80-7.

Khetarpal, Dr, Dalip, ed. *Man of the Seventh Hour* by Manas Bakshi. Explicated by Dr. RC Mukhopadhyaya, Poetry Society of India, 2019. Pp. 149, Rs. 390.00/ \$ 27.00

Raghupathi, K. V. *The Mountain is Calling: A Collection of Poems*. White Falcon Publishing, 2019. Pp. 100; Rs. 200/-

Mukhopadhyaya, Dr. Ramesh Chandra, ed. *Poetical Sensibility of KV Dominic's Creative Muse*. Authors Press, 2019.

Roy, Basudhara. *Moon in My Teacup*. Writers Workshop, 2019. Pp. 89. Rs. 300 (HB)

Khullar, Vishal. *Mist in Shades* (Poetry in Translation). Association for Cultural Fraternity, 2020. Pp. 80. Rs. 150.

—D. C. Chambial—

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the “present anthology endeavours to explore the multiplicity of interpretations contextualizing literary renditions” and that the writers selected in this book “portray the permutations of rich Indian soil and permeate the core of mankind at large”.

The book has 8 articles on the Indian English poetry: A. N. Dwivedi studies A. K. Ramanujam’s poetry for the use of Indian myths and Gauri Shankar Jha, R. Parthasarathy as less explored poet. Poonam Dwivedy surveys the entire corpus of Anil Sharma’s poetry while Pallavi Srivastava critically evaluates A. N. Dwivedy’s poetry in *Wayward Wanderings*. Binod Mishra looks for the theme of love in Pashupati Jha’s poetry and DC Chambial also finds love as the culmination in R. C. Shukla’s poetry. Indrajeet Mishra examines four volumes of Charu Sheel Singh for “narratives of transcendence”. Babli Mallick makes a comparative study of Kamala Das and Taslim Nasrin from the perspective of Feminism.

There are 15 articles on Indian English Fiction: Usha Bande’s article studies the novels of Arvind Adiga, Sanjay Bahadur, Kiran Desai, Eric Fromm, Amitava Kumar, Kamala Markandaya, Siddharth Sanghvi, and Tarun Tejpal. Nilanshu Agarwal exposes the Colonial Agenda in Indian English novel and Khem Raj Sharma explores V.S. Naipal’s novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas*. Shubha Mukherjee studies the fiction of Bharati Mukherjee while Archana Singh, Anita Desai’s *Fire on the Mountain*. A. J. Sebastian makes an indepth study of Mahesh Dattani’s drama, *Where There is a Will* and Ibrahim Khalilulla, M. writes a critique on Amitava Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Vinutha H M explores the Dalit consciousness and identity of Dalit Women in Bama’s *Karukku*, *Sangati* and *Vanam* and Sunita Rani focuses on travails of women in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine*. While Umashankar Vyas surveys Adiga’s *The White Tiger* from Marxist standpoint, Raj Kumar Mishra and Ajay Kumar Chaudhary study Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* for crime and violence. Gurinder Kaur Singh critically examines Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions* and Indu Goyal, Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time*.

My objective is only to show what the readers, students, and scholars of Indian English literature can find in this book and where and when it can be useful. It is a thought-provoking book that goads and stirs the minds of readers and critics alike. Many more books of such quality, evaluating the Indian English literature, are the need of the hour. It is a significant addition to the study of Indian English literature. The book deserves place in every library.

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### 16

The book, *Glass House* by Peeran\*, is a compendium of fifteen short stories, seven articles, and 158 poems. Besides these, the book has “Foreword” by Dr. M. Thirumani of Presidency College, Chennai and “Preface” by the writer.

While the first story, “Glass House” has 21 chapters and runs into 59 pages. The second, “Dews on Dry Leaves” is 33 pages long and is divided into five chapters. Other stories are short and their length varies between three and nine pages. While the story, “Glass House”, through varied characters represents mini India living harmoniously, “A Search of a Lost Boy” depicts the missing of a boy, Keerti, and after lodging a complaint in police, his parents also bank on superstitions and occult services of tantrics - a Muzawar, a tarot reader, a Moulavi Sab by visiting “Temples, Dargas, soothsayers, tantrics occultists and others”, but to no avail. However, his father comes to know about him after three months and ten days and he returns home the next day.

The seven articles: “His Majesty, His Excellency, His Highness, His Lordship, Honble Self I”, “Our Highness, Lording Hon’ble Self”, “Sajjada Nishin”, “Rishies, Swamies, Sadhus, Acharyas, Yogies, Munnies And Gurus of India”, “A Fakir, A Sadhu, A Mendicant and a Rag Picker”, “The Personality of A Mother”, and “Don Quixote: The Juggler”. The first article is six pages long while the other articles’ length is consistently confined to two pages each. As the titles of the articles foretell the characters that Peeran has written about in them.

There are 158 poems divided into three parts: first 75 poems are on the positive nature of man, the next 60 poems – 76 to 135 – are on the negative nature of man and the remaining 23 poems – 136-158 – are categorized as general poems. Large number of poems are on the positive nature of man such as truth, simplicity, leadership, who a Mahatma is, total surrender, balanced man, patience, world citizen, mother, teacher as a beacon of light, how to handle a woman, raising of self above selfishness, sincerity, humility and submission, golden hearts, guru, fakirs, love, and end of all – a poem based on Sufi, Buddhist, Jain and Vedantic philosophy – when the soul will “return to abode of peace” leaving the “decaying body / And sorrowful world” (290).

The negative attributes of man, meditated upon in the second set of poems, comprise corruption, foolishness, bandicoot, cold behaviour, man as destroyer, perniciousness, disgust, bohemian attitude, savagery, suffering, rivalry, tyranny, deception, betrayal, anger and lie, jealousy, sadism, and an anguished cry of the protagonist to “subdue the ironic inner demon, / Who has spread its tentacles” like cancer to destroy him.

General poems deal with themes like thankfulness, ponzy schemes, wine, facets of love, love as celestial gift, solitude, peace, life new year, rebellion and

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aggression, and he prays “for light to descend” (377) and of a heaven of the unknown “Where milk and honey flows (sic) always. / Where joys never fade or diminish. / Where sensuousness flows like a stream” (374).

The book is rich in human morality belonging to all faiths. He indubiously is a moral teacher. The epitome of his writings is humanism and I think that is the great quality of a true man of God. The book by Dr Peeran is worth reading. It is full of gems to lead an upright life in this chaotic world where all are busy in their “sick hurry and divided aims”. I wish it a place in every library around the globe.

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### 17

The book, *Man of the Seventh Hour* by Manas Bakshi\*, first published in 2006, but the one explicated by Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya\* has been published in 2019. It has nine chapters corresponding to the Prelude and Seven Poems (hour-wise) explicated by the noted critic, and the Epilogue. The editor, Dr Dalip Khetarpal, himself a noted poet and critic, has arranged the matter with his Preface in this sequence: The text of the seven poems, the critic’s explications – explication of each poem begins with the text of the poem, Epilogue, References, and excerpts from the earlier reviews of the book.

The critic in the first chapter says: “Since the poet is a seer and an ascetic, we are eager to learn the mystery of the existence through which the riddles of the Life Cycle unravel” (51). The second chapter, “First Hour: Victory” is, according to the critic, “the narrative of creation and about man” (68). The third, “Second Hour: Desire” sums up life in the contingent world as “a wave in the ocean of time or a spark in the vast firework of creation” (78). “Third Hour: Greed” is interpreted as *avidya* and the “honeymoon with evil cannot last long” (87), yet the man thinks it to last far good. In “Fourth Hour: Fear”, man’s fear “amid nuclear and ecological threat,” is that “our Mother Nature once overflowing with abandon and abundance has been reduced to a skeleton” (99).

In “Fifth Hour: Rage”, the critic comments: “There is not enough resource and wealth for man to slake his lust and greed. ... Man does not have the cool to take reality as it is” (111). The seventh chapter, “Sixth Hour: Conflict”, “is a depiction in concrete imagery the Odysseus of man riding the obstinate mare of politics”. Here, the pigheaded and “heedless horse of man’s desire and lust draws him into the unplumbed abyss” (120). In “Seventh Hour: Decadence”, the critic observes that “man must be punished” for “his crime against love and life” (138). In the epilogue, the editor reviews the reviews of BM Jackson, S.L. Peeran, N.P. Singh, Srinivas Rangaswami, P. V. Laxmi Prasad, and observes that “The personal emotions



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of Dr. Manas Bakshi, the egotistical sublime have been transferred here to the impersonal world of art and poetry” (145).

The book also has reference page which refers to fourteen books/articles/reviews and the fifteenth tells what the poet wants to say in this poem embracing the theme of Biblical sins and that the poet here “holds a mirror to all humanity” (146). The review section, pages 147-49, have excerpts from the reviews of BM Jackson, The Asian Age, National Herald, Patricia Prime, S. C. Pande, S.L. Peeran, P.V. Laxmi Prasad, Rita Nath Keshari, excerpts from articles in *Exploring New Horizons* (ed, P. V. Laxmi Prasad) by Dalip Khetarpal, Santosh Ajit Singh, and G. Srilata. It is fittingly said: “Each Hour discovers to explore the meaning of the name-tag attached to it” (149).

The editor, Dr. Khetarpal, calls *Man of the Seventh Hour* “a socio-philosophical epic” and that it “is a psycho-analytical masterpiece on modern man who alone is responsible for his pitiable plight” and that the critic, Dr. Mukhopadhyaya “has perfectly elucidated this book in his own way and style” (Preface). The book presents an insightful reading to the avid readers of Manas Bakshi’s poetry in particular and Indian English poetry in general.

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## 18

**Dr KV Raghupathi\*** is a renowned poet, critic, short story writer, novelist, and book reviewer besides being a unique philosopher. His other passions are Karnatic music and Yoga. He is widely published and recipient of several awards including the coveted Michael Madhusudan Academy award, Kolkata. In his poetry, he well-nigh takes his readers on the spiritual exploration of radical philosophical thoughts which is also manifest in his present collection.

The book, *The Mountain Is Calling – A Collection of Poems*, has one hundred poems. In these poems, he gives vent to his philosophy about the mountain. The book begins with a competition of rivers with ocean without knowing it. The book moves forward with the idea taking butterflies, birds and moon, and Samadhi as a perfect balance, seasons, refuting the concept of *moksha*, negation of self, the mountain where sun shines and from where rivers flow, mortality of all things - animate or inanimate, *yogadharma*, *Maya*, poetry manifest in everything mundane, everything is inherent in life, consciousness of the original mind, silence, refutation of *jiva* and *para*, but acknowledges *atman*, paradox of life and death – the two can’t “co-habit”, spirituality – action in inaction, *karma*, primordial beauty, *Kaivalya*, true life begins when curiosity comes to an end, loneliness becoming infinite, conservatism, understanding of good and bad, and so on.

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For him, Yogadhrama is a journey without purpose and happens to those who move alone - without caring for any sort of company and when you become enlightened – “when the sun shines in you”, and to one who watches without any thought – stays dispassionate; dharma without Datta (*daan*, charity) is useless, it pleads to shun duality. It “never happens / until the cup is empty” – one needs free oneself from faiths and prejudices to practice Yogadhama. It comes from negation and understanding of self and accepting the paradoxes. It lies neither in authority nor in subordination. Dharma cannot be attained or realized by hearing, reading, or imitating; one has to live it to banish duality from one’s mind. Desires destroy dharma.

Transcendentalism and transmigration of soul is beautifully expressed: “You are flitting like a butterfly / landing on another withered leaf”. Karma is in everything; everything and all are slave to karma; *karuna* is quintessence of it. For him, “There is neither *prakriti* nor *purusha*. / It is oneness in indistinctness.” A perfect man is as clear as “a sky with no clouds”. He, through the metaphor of ocean, tells when soul merges with Super-Soul that is the ultimate end of the human salvation, as “the water goes nowhere from there (ocean)”. “There is no vision in the river’s joining the ocean” – it needs one’s steadfastness. The poet also exhorts humanity to stay rooted in earth/reality, otherwise “will fall out” in the long run. His is a philosophy of conservatism: “All things from the beginning are as they are. / Altering the condition is misery”.

In order to understand “the principles of universe” one has to understand the essence of “right and wrong”. While illumination is release from world, ego comes from consciousness of one’s status. For true happiness, one has to develop void or *sunyata* in oneself. “Wisdom is like clapping in a single hand” – it is soundlessness; it is in humility opposed to arrogance. There is an uncanny comparison in “Your quoting scriptures like dogs pissing at dustbin”.

The poet is of the view that mountain has its wisdom which is not recognized as it lies in its “stillness and silence”. Each poem begins with the line - “The mountain is calling”, which is the title of the book; this line is used, perhaps, to stress the endemic idea of the poet’s philosophy manifest here. It is a book only for those well-versed in dharma, yogadhama and philosophy; for, the poet, himself, is copiously well-versed and immersed in these. The book needs repeated readings in order to imbibe its inherent message.

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### 19

The book, *Poetical Sensibility of KV Dominic's Creative Muse*, edited by Dr. Mukhopadhyaya\* is an authentic collection of thirty research articles on Dominic's poetry by eminent scholars, four reviews of his books by Anisha Ghosh (Paul), Dr. Laxmi R. Chauhan, Dr. Sangeeta Mahesh and Nandita Bhattacharya; three interviews with Goutam Karmakar, Parthajit Ghosh and Dr. Rohit Phutela; his One Act Play, *God's Tribunal*, remarkable quotes from his poetry besides a review of *Philosophical Musings for a Meaningful Life: An Analysis of K.V. Dominic's Poems* by the editor.

Poets have ever been part of the society in which they live; hence the happenings of the society become apparent in their poetry and Dr. Dominic is no exception to it. Dr. M. K. Chand Raj, Kasturi Silva Prasad, K. Pankajam, Dr. Sugandha Agrawal, DC Chambial and S. Pathmanathan (Sopa) have studied Dominic's poetry from this perspective at what social aspects and burning concerns he focuses and what reforms he wants in the society. To Dr. Trayee Sinha, the poetry of Dominic gives "mental solace" (139). Though Dr. S. Barathi studies his selected poems from stylistic perspective, yet finds his "focus on the society ... [and] ... humanistic attitude" (149). Dominic, through his poetry, "envision[s] a harmonious world and ... [calls] for a change in outlook of man" (169), observes Kavitha Gopalakrishnan, if he has to live happily and healthily. Biswanath Kundu, Chitra Lele, Prof. Elisabeth Marino and Silvia Florence & (Mrs) Raichel M. Sylus focus their attention on Dominic's delineation of nature in his poetry in its varied aspects. Dr. Poonam Nigam Sahay finds despair in his poetry on account of man's unbecoming behaviour with man, still his faith is not lost "in the goodness of mankind" (75).

Daya Dissanayake finds that Dominic is "trying to seek Emancipation, true emancipation for all life" (85) on this earth. While Dr. Arbind K. Chaudhary traces several "social, national, global, natural and historical issues" (98) in his poetry, Manas Bakshi locates Dominic's profound love for "human beings, animals, plants, as also the inanimate" (108). Dr. Sweta Sood observes: "he accentuates on the need to reawaken the lost consciousness and instill a spirit of humanism in all human beings" (126) to make this world a better place to live in. Dr. Mousami Ghosh's article is in the form of a letter to the reader in interpreting Dominic's poetry from economic perspective. She observes: Dominic "never ignores the society and economy" (175). Dr. Poonam Dwivedi finds Dominic as an "ambassador of humanity" (200) because "patriotism and nationalism are the hall marks of the poet's mindfulness" (199). Dr. Sabita Chakraborty observes: "with him the existence is an orchestra" ... "composed of countless players ..." (209) and to Sheeba Ramadhevan "his creations are beautiful fairies in the attire of simplicity" (215); to Dr. Y. Vidya, "Dominic's poetry is suffused with inspired moral optimism ... [and] has a unique appellation as the poet of Nature" (252).

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If Dr. S. Chelliah calls Dominic “the poet extraordinary” (269), Dr Laxmi R. Chaugan finds in his poetry “an aesthetic and spiritual reflection of world” (275). Though “the misdemeanor of man” frustrates Dominic, yet “he does not lose his faith in mankind” (302), states Parthajit Ghosh. Alexander Raju studies Dominic as “a poet of sparks and flames” (306) and Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ, “a humane poet” (307) in their articles. Dr. Pamela Jeyaraju states that Dominic “hails the deserving” and never “spares the wrong doer” (317) as a poet. In his review, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, examines the reviews and articles of several authors like PCK Prem, Dr S Kumaran, Dr Sudhir K Arora, DC Chambial, T. V. Reddy, Dr Sugandha Gupta, Dr J Pamela, Dr S Ayyappa Raja , Patricia Prime, and others to point out that “there is the efflorescence of n dimensions of poetry as such and Domini’s poetry and readers will circumambulate [his] poetry knowing not what to say in times to come” (405).

This book has enough matter to stir the sensibility of Dominic’s critics and readers alike and whet the critical acumen of the students of his poetry to explore some more unseen aspects and tenets of it in the years to follow.

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The book, *Moon in My Teacup*, under review is Dr. Basudhara’s\* debut book in the domain of Indian English poetry. She is an alumnus and gold-medalist of BHU and has earned her doctorate in literature on the short fiction of Bharti Mukherjee, Chitra Nanerjee and Jhumpa Lahiri from Kolhan university, Chaibasa. Her poems articles, short stories and research papers have already been published in several print and on-line journals.

The book has 52 poems with a short but crisp Foreword by Mamang Dai, a renowned poet from the north-east India. In her preface, Basudhara avers: “Poetry for me has always been a companion. Not of life headlong activity, but of the rustle of its quieter moments when the clarity of prose is defeated, silenced and overwhelmed by the need for figurative explorations of experience” (Preface).

Any collection of poems does not have one theme but the themes vary as the number of poems. So this book too is no exception. The titles of these poems range from culinary love to conjugation, commitment to exile, wealth to assassination, poetry to plants, beyond to pillion-riding, and many more. However, love dominates all. the “Culinary Love” begins with telling “I culled once words for you ... and soaked them ... in the warm water of my love” from which vegetated “shoots of belonging” and needed “the bruises for my art” (15). These lines, nay, the poem,

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echo Sumitranandan Pant's lines : fo;ksxh gksxk igyk dfo] vkg ls fudyk gksxk xku]@ meM+&?kqeM++ dj cgh gksxh dfork vutkuA Look at: "Word-love then / had better sprout, justifiably, / on beds of deceit" (37). The poem, "Conjugation" is about the writing of a poem: "love's steady assurance / to finally submit / upon a page" (21) and then "in the thick of language / in the thin of thought ... / poetry is born" (21-22). If "Parting" is about the "hurt" which finally drives her "insane" is of "your final retreat" (23), "Manuscript" is burnt lest "you might / read yourself in it" (25). "Commitment" tries to conceal "reeling confessions" and forbids the one, who tries to "pry into existences" (28) without being a friend. The persona asks the love to commit to know "in the bosom of darknesses / there glow blazing suns – (29). But, in "Unmet", "you alone remain in memory" (49). "Ah, Come on darling!" (55), says the protagonist of "Assassination" after killing the word called "Love".

If "blank pages turn" the protagonist on "over vast universes of thought" (40), "Labyrinthine Thoughts..." "wrap distances and / unfurl memories" about "the girl, the wife, the hag" (44) that are "the thorns of Time" (45). "The Journey" is about the memories from childhood, neighbours and "gay streamers of togetherness" who parted as discontented travelers but "I live as I travel" (48). "A Traveller Called Time" brought reminiscences and that was the "long wait's fulfilment" to stir up "culinary nostalgias" tells of the protagonist's despair – "doors now shut forever" (51). While "Lifetime" laments "the pain of those / infidelous ties that bind" (58), "Fall" vouchsafes not to "play traitor with my [her] soul" (60). "Used Body" is the tragedy of a sterile – "wombless body" (66). Notice the pangs: "I would fain / thaw like snow but / passion-struck, you hasten / to light bonfires instead" (74-75).

"Poetry" is the product of "Love" that is neglected, festered and then thickens and informs the love: "Years hence, you shall marvel / at the variety that I collect" (61). In "Beyond", the protagonist/poet craves for recognition: "would there still, my love, be / recognition" ... "to remember all that has been / cluelessly forgotten" (62). In "Loss", the protagonist laments "the inevitability of non-return" from one who has never known the pangs of separation, finally, tosses "promises/ into the air" and waits "for them to / unforgivingly return as rain" (67) – hope is not lost. "This book of life we authored together" giving "our versions of moments, people, / places that never tally" have resulted into "rare poems, startlingly beautiful" ("Together" 86).

With "Pillion-riding, on a Winter Evening" the riders cover many lands – "We do not know how many / worlds we have lost" and have pocketed "the jokes, / smiles, laughter," on their way and "borrowed lipsticks, dresses, / shoulders to cry on;" (88). They call themselves as "explorers" and "tempted by rare leisure, / adventure, freedom" they move on to "destinations unknown, obscure" with their "lives clutched in the palms" (89) of their hands. Thus, the journey is complete from culinary love to pillion-riding finding the "past and present" of mind as "Two different worlds" (47).

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The book presents a magical read transporting the readers through her spruce images to the lands of love well blended with imagination and freckled with some tragic moments, may be, of unrequited love. There is no doubt that the poet, Dr. Basudhara, will soon be shining star on the citadel of Indian English poetry. Her poetry is so beautiful and deep that no review can do any justice – it needs critical attention of the contemporary critics. She deserves all accolades for her poetic acumen!

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The book, *Mist in Shades*, by Vishal Khullar\* has 38 *ghazals*, 18 other poems - I and 3 other poems-II; in total, there are 59 poems. It is wonderful as it very clearly differentiates between *ghazals*, *nazms* (poems) and *nasri nazams* (prose poems). Not only this, he also very aptly explains, for those who are not familiar with *ghazal*, the various constituent parts of a *ghazal* like its rhyme scheme, *radeef*, *kafia*, *sh'er*, *matla* and *makta* in his prefatory note – ‘About the Book’.

The poet is M. Sc. in Agricultural Economics, M.A. in Mass communication and also has a diploma in Urdu language. He has two books of Urdu poetry – *Dhund Mein Amaan* (2011) and *Khwaab Palkon Mein* (2017). The English translation of his Urdu *ghazals* and poems has been published in 2020. He has very carefully and skillfully maintained the Urdu structure of his *ghazals* even in his translations. Let's have a feel:

My share in skies just a measure  
I must measure the edges I measure

What a refuse in the mist!  
You may wonder that's the measure

Though it hurts still I look at it  
Mark on my heart deeper the measure

Never does the sorrow isolate me  
He, my follower see the measure

Ego! You're tested in tougher times  
Tolerance in you is the measure (Ghazal No. 10)

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In this *ghazal*, the poet, very aptly follows the rhyme scheme of AA, BA, CA, DA, EA. Here, the phrase ‘the measure’ is *radeef* and ‘measure’, the *kafia*. The *ghazal* has five *sh’er*. The first *sh’er*/couplet, “My share in skies just a measure / I must measure the edges I measure”, is *matla*; the last, “Ego! You’re tested in tougher times / Tolerance in you is the measure”, *makta*. However, in his English translations, the pen-name/name, in the *makta* of the *ghazal*, is missing.

The theme of *ghazals* always remains love or unrequited love and Khullar’s *ghazals* too are no exception to it. The same theme seems to be there in his poems as well. I liked “Face No Face” (A tribute to Connie Culp, an American woman, whose husband shot her in the face, leaving it completely disfigured. Later on, doctors performed thirty plastic surgeries to give her a new face) from his ‘Other Poems – II’. The poem is given below:

In face-less state  
she creates monologue / the dream  
which we ignored / to whom she talks  
how she respire / at moon’s halo  
at dawn, broken up / how she scatters down  
  
How she remembers / a prayer-like face  
we may not know! / you may not know!!  
They may not know!!!  
  
This time in her neck / prick your teeth  
else her face will be / face-less—as such (‘Face No Face’ 76)

It evokes reader’s sympathy for the pain and agony that the woman bore due to her cruel husband.

He has already had approbations from Sarah Miller of Yale University Press, USA, James Houghton of Olympia Publishers, London, Amit Garg from Gyan books, Delhi, and Team Pirates, New Delhi. His poems have also been published in *Indian Literature*, *Urdu Alive*, *Literary Herald*, *IJML*, *Cyber Literature*, and *Contemporary Literary Review India*. To me, he has ventured into a new genre in English in his *ghazals* – “keeping in mind its *radeef* wherever possible without compromising with soul of the poem/couplet” (9) and that is unique. The book is worth reading. I also wish him success in his translations like his original Urdu poems/*ghazals*.

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