Red Mushroom

Three Indian English Poets

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Indrajeet Mishra

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Foreword

Indian English poetic tradition carries the seed and sediments of systems of philosophy and notion of spirituality as its root lies in Vedic mantric tradition. The aim of true Indian poetry has been the attainment of *Sat-Chit-Anand*- the state of permanent bliss and it is possible only when poetry is produced out of meandering of breath; out of sadhana and manan. It is no wonder that we feel lack of ecstatic state of mind in the poems of city-bred poets. Empirical experiences cannot formulate poetics of spirituality. To narrate spiritual poetic consciousness a poet needs to perceive images and symbols from zero degree ambience and transportation in this realm is possible with greatest poetic tool known as meditative imagination. Imagination is the creative fecundity of a poet and realization of this potency within one's own self can take place with divinely inspired state of mind and ultimately it leads journey of a poet beyond process of mental thinking, time, and space and beyond geographical and linguistical contour. Hence, Poetry begotten of miraculous soul never dies and always yearns for freedom from bondage of material façade.

The poetic vision and narratives of transcendence of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore which inaugurated an era in Indian English poetry have been ousted by new generation poets like R. Parthasarthy and A. K. Mehrortra among others, on the ground that in post-independent and post modern milieu such a stream of poetry is futile and obsolete. The city-bred poets'

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consciousness finds true Indian sensibility in the grossest and meanest aspects of life. Hence, they gradually marginalize true Indian sensibility, seminal Indian scriptures and Upnishadic tradition from their world of poetry. The politics of canon formation is an ongoing process making the mainstream the margin and margin the mainstream. However, establishment of epistemic discourses or determination of central corpus on the basis of political backings and foreign publications can never pave the path of margin to the mainstream. Why top literary academicians are silent on such a naked truth of canonical texts? What is the criterion of designing university syllabi? Are we still colonized by mind? What is the definition of poetry? Is it a tool to derive sexual and social pleasure? Satire and irony and foregrounding of fissured structures of socio-historical specificity cannot distort Indian tradition for so long. Indrajeet in his book strongly deconstructs current mainstream of Indian English poetry by bringing forth poetic canon of Charu Sheel Singh, Niranjan Mohanty and Bibhu Padhi. He is of the opinion that for the sustenance of true literariness and to achieve lost space canon must be elaborated and axioms of mainstream must be revised and redefined. He has successfully chalked out entire trajectory of Indian English poetry with special emphasis to Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. The possibility of getting back the poetry of transcendence and liberation highlights the relevance of Charu Sheel Singh in the contemporary scenario. He has not only regenerated ages old Indian poetic tradition with his rare combination of mythical and mystic nature of poetry but also creates a native model with cosmopolitan approach. He has extended epical model of writing of *Gitanjali* of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*. He combines in his nerves and arteries Vedic rhythms, Puranic narration and mythology. The Poet has expressed Matthew Arnold's doctrine of poetry i.e

cultural amelioration. Niranjan Mohanty's contribution is praiseworthy. His two long poems, *Prayers to Lord Jagganath* and *Krishna* are symphonies of the bhakti poetry in which one can feel the man woman relationship as an embodiment of mystical love. The former poem is also the longest poem written in Indian English poetry so far. He blends tradition and modernity uniquely and provides unconstrained jouissance of Indian sensibility. Bibhu Padhi's journey from personal to universal is remarkably interesting. Personal relationships ancestral friendships and oriya cultural identity appear prominently in his poems. If at the level of poetic technique shows affinity with A K Ramanujan, the thematic and rhythmic concern brig him closer to Jayant Mahapatra.

The inseparable relationship of poetry and philosophy is one of the most significant aspects of Indian English poetry. The word produced as the fruit of meditation becomes philosophic in nature, therefore it is always musical. Within the poetic compass of Vedic and non- Vedic schools of philosophy the city-bred poets are exposed whereas, Charu Sheel Singh's volumes like *Tapascharnam* and other poems synthesize the Vedantic Brahma through various epistemologies. His other volumes like *The Indian Hero, The Creation Cocktail* and *Ten Mahavidyas* are written on the epic scale and written on the cyclic model of the Puranas.

The poetic mapping of Indianness through the lens of historical imagination of the poet in depicting the historical, mythological and legendary figures draws a new parameter of Indian English poetry. History and culture contain seed of temporality which has always indication of trans-temporality. The interiors of history which are defunct carry regenerative aspects. The emphasis is on redefining the figures of historical golden folio to depict the truth.

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Myths are generally taken as implausible stories but they are not confined to one such definition as they have different dimensions and categories. Cosmological myth and its understanding reveal the cyclical nature of creation and destruction. The moment a poet like Charu Sheel Singh conceives in his consciousness mythical geography creates history of transcendental realm and this history is beyond logic and argument. His delivery through the mediums of antonyms and synonyms provides channels of the Unknown Being who is within and beyond words. However, in the state of zero degree languages die themselves but for the world of time words are themselves cosmic forces. Bibhu Padhi highlights the relevance of myth in contemporary life to exhibit the present in terms of past. Indrajeet's contributions in this book are acknowledgingly remarkable. In the whole book he strongly deconstructs such poetics of poetry that is focused on depicting the ruptures and fissures of personal and social life. He successfully grounds Charu Sheel Singh's poetic stance in the present time along with Niranjan Mohanty and Bibhu Padhi. His attempt to underscore another mainstream in Indian English poetry by bringing forth poetic canon of these poets is highly laudable and his book deserves applause and a place in academic sphere. It is vital that Indian readership studies emerging signatures in poetry. Indrajeet has focused upon a new canonical consciousness that re-lives the Vedic sensibility of I-Thou relationship. The book shows a pathway to emerging scholars providing them new spaces of understanding and habitation.

Prof. Krishna Mohan Pandey
(Head Department of English
BHU, Varanasi)

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Preface

The tradition of Indian English poetry has been the oldest, richest and greatest laced with spiritual and philosophical notions. Poetry in India is mantra as its origin lies in the *Vedas*. It has been the medium of liberation and way to reach into the eternal realm. The meditation of the poets of rishi tradition transports their consciousness beyond mental thinking and enables them to perceive the cosmic seed. Aurobindo and Tagore's subliminal imagination melts into figuration, the transcendental being. Aurobindo has close affinity with Vedic spiritual values. In each of his images, symbols and language he searches for the immanental presence of God. Tagore too enjoys the ecstasy of rishi tradition and seems to extend the medieval devotional poetry. The era inaugurated by Aurobindo and Tagore's poetry was the heyday of nativity theory but it could not prolong for long. The new generation poets like Ezekiel, Daurwalla among others, who are city bred, fail to find any value and essence in the poetry of Vedic tradition. The lack of indigenous tradition and culture in the poetry of these poets make them true representatives of ruptured society. Great tradition contains universal principles which are impossible in the urban sensibility filled with irony and satire. With the advent of modern poets Indian poetic tradition has witnessed a downfall. Therefore, it is high time for the Indian literary scholars to regain the lost poetic stream.

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The present project has settled a poetic paradigm with the framework of tradition for another mainstream in Indian English poetry. It establishes canons of such poets which emerge out of Indian philosophy, epistemology, legend, myth and history. Charu Sheel Singh, Niranjan Mohanty and Bibhu Padhi are extensively discussed with the claim of regenerating the old Indian concepts. C S Singh is the first major contemporary Indian English poet whose poetry moves back to the *Vedas*, *Upnishads*, *Puranas* and *Bhagwatgita*. His poetry includes mythical, philosophical, mystical and historical consciousness which is essential to understand Indianness. In innovative way Singh extends the poetic model of Aurobindo and Tagore. Niranjan Mohanty and Bibhu Padhi are the two other poets who depict Indianness with simplicity in their poetry without any pretention. Mohanty reminds of devotional poets though he is not a mystic. He celebrates human power and human limitations. Padhi raises numerous issues related to man and contemporary society but he is not under the spell of consumerist culture. The book follows the comparative method in all the chapters. The study of C S Singh arouses an instinct to be meditative to capture the lineaments of his poetic texture.

The first chapter traces the subtle nuances of the poetic sensibility of the poets of two schools of Indian English Poetry with the available scholarship to highlight the gap in the perpetuation of true Indianness in Indian poetic tradition. The chapter also defines another mainstream with the new poetic paradigm of C S Singh, Niranjan Mohanty and Bibhu Padhi.

The second chapter represents the inseparable affiliation of philosophy and poetry in India. Poetry composed out of deep meditation and detachment reaches eternity beyond corporality and clutches of time.

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It describes the major philosophies and philosophical schools and its embodiment in the poetry of Tagore, Aurobindo, C S Singh and others.

The third chapter deals with the historical imagination of the poets in delineating the canons of historical and mythological characters like Buddha, Ram, Meera, Gandhi and others. The vision of regeneration of history can only inaugurate a new era. C S Singh's three poetic volumes- *Scripture on Stone*, *Legacies* and *Etching on the Edge*- are basis of whole discussion.

Chapter four describes different notions of myth and mythical pattern of the poets. Myths woven into morphology of text emerge as historical persona. It especially covers mythographic imagination of C S Singh's *Born Across Millennium Incarnations of Vishnu* and *Ten Mahavidyas* and Bibhu Padhi's *Choosing a Place*.

The whole study inclines to create another mainstream in Indian English Poetry on the basis of the poetic canon of C S Singh, Niranjan Mohanty and Bibhu Padhi. Poetry of high seriousness of C S Singh occupies central position in this mainstream which imbibes in it-self thousands of years of tradition along with contemporary sensibility.

While writing this book, I have incurred debts of gratitude which I acknowledge with pleasure. I owe a very special gratefulness to my principal **Dr. S. D. Singh,** DAV PG College, Varanasi who always inspired me to complete this book. I have been extended all the encouragement and co-operation from my colleagues **Dr. Sangeeta Jain**, **Dr. Bandana Balchandnani**, **Dr. Mahima Singh**, **Mr. Najmul Hasan** and **Ms. Anjali**. A word is due to all other staff members of D A V PG College, Varanasi for their support.

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I have deepest sense of gratitude for **Prof. Charu Sheel Singh**, Department of English, M G K V P, Varanasi for raising in me a consciousness to work in this field.

My deepest sense of gratitude, however, is for **Prof K M Pandey**, Department of English, BHU, Varanasi who always extended his help and guidance and has remained an inspiring force in the completion of this book.

I put on record my deep sense of appreciation for the courtesy and help I received from the librarians and the staff of the National Library Kolkata, Sayazi Rao Gayakwad Library, Banaras Hindu University, N. I. R. I.E.L., Gulbarga, and Shri Bhagwan Das Library, M.G. Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi.

On this occasion, I extend my thanks to my revered brother Mr. Kailash Nath Mishra, wife Dr. Kranti Mishra, daughter Siddhi, Son Shresth and nephew Awadhesh Mishra who have been constant source of inspiration for me.

Finally, I close this on the name of **Almighty**, who blessed me with the courage and patience to overcome difficult moments.

Indrajeet Mishra

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Abbreviations of Frequently Cited Works

Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan	*ABL*
Born Across Millenniums: Incarnations of Vishnu	*BAM*
Contemporary Vibes	*CV*
Creation Cocktail	*CC*
Current English for Language Skills	*CELS*
Echo and Voice in Indian Poetry in English	*EVI*
The Essentials of Indian Philosophy	*EIP*
The Future Poetry	*FP*
Gitanjali-Song Offerings	*G*
A History of Indian English Literature	*HIEL*
Indian English Poetry	*IEP*
The Indian Hero	*IH*
Indian Poetry in English	*IPE*
In Search of God and Other Poems	*ISGO*
Indian Writing in English	*IWE*
Oh! This Bloody Game	*BG*
Painting the House	*PH*
Poetry's Peripheral Fold: Satish Aikant in Conversation with Charu Sheel Singh	*PPF*
Prayers to Lord Jagannatha	*PLJ*
Songs of Life and Death	*SLF*
Tapascharnam	*T*

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Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets	*TTCI*
Tradition and the Individual Talent	*TIT*
A Wound Elsewhere	*WE*

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