

GLIMPSES OF INDIAN SOCIETY IN INDO-ENGLISH POETRY IN THE FIRST DECADE OF 21ST CENTURY

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It was only eleven years before that India entered into a new millennium, now the first decade is over. Contemporary man is unable to get solace, comfort, love and peace of mind. They feel lost in such an environment. Cheerless picture of modern world makes these poets forlorn, most of the contemporary poets protest against the modern civilization. Superficial love is also an integral part of current life. Man's heart is devoid of true feelings and packed with thoughts that have no pedestal of reality. The profession of these poets also plays a vital role in their writings. **Mohammad Ahsan** comes from Indian forest services. He used his pen to save nature and wild life. He himself writes: "Forest service gave me closeness to nature and a sense of appreciation for the things natural." About his poetic collection *The Little Sparrow, Poems on Nature and Wildlife* (2007) he writes: "These forty poems have been set aside that focus primarily on nature and wildlife. They are product of a mind that was wandering into the jungles and abodes of wildlife. Forest service gave me a fine sensitivity to appreciate nature and wildlife in a blissful and spiritual manner." India is now in a much-improved state in terms of technology. Cybernetics being the lifeblood has entirely changed the lifestyle of contemporary man. But such tremendous technical advancement could not recuperate the moral degeneracy. Indian English poets writing in this decade have dextrously delineated the picture of unfeigned India.

*Man for centuries
On the pages of time
Has been writing
The story of his existence;
Then the third eye of science opened
A Robot was envisioned
And captured into a computer programme by man
...
The robot now writes the story of time,
On the body of the computer,
Where is the existence of man?*

Amar Jyoti in her book *Forbidden Fruit* (2007) composed these lines with absolute virtuoso. Her vision is majestically true in relation to the contemporary age. Dr. Amar Jyoti, now living in Amsterdam, got published her six books of poetry, two of prose and has also edited two books. She has received various awards and honours which include, **Shiromani Punjabi Sahitkaar award**. In her wonderful collection of poems *Forbidden Fruit*, she defined famine in these words:

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*Hunger when it takes the shape of a demon
Hunger when it becomes cruel
Hunger when it becomes hell*

We give it the name of famine.

Weeping and sobbing at her helplessness she articulates her anxiety and concern in these lines:

*Famine in Ethiopia
Thousands of children
Many mothers and fathers
crying and dying in Africa with hunger
Whenever I think of them
I cannot control myself
And my eyes are full of tears
My heart crying in helplessness
To do something O' friends...*

The Ballad of Noman (2005) is a remarkable collection of satirical poems by **Ashok Sharma**. The book is divided into three segments: Prologue, Confessions and Epilogue respectively. He tries to articulate the tension of his age in these words:

“Where is Hell? Beyond the proverbial seven skies! Oh, no! It is entrenched in one’s actions. One who dances to the tune of Desire invariably experiences infernal shocks every now and then and daily shuttles between Heaven and Hell as one claps to the parade of deadly sins....Hell is no particular locality ;rather ,it is a state of mind.”

About the protagonist of the book he writes :

“Here, the protagonist does not represent any particular person. He represents everyman; we all are such stuff.”

Man entered into a new millennium but he could not relieve himself from hypocrisy, fear, wealth power, and vice.

*Entered I this world like a lack grace,
Examined every face, pale was every face,
Unwelcome I was in this world of disgrace,
Even my own mother turned from me her face.*

Ashok Sharma in a sheer audacious tone expressed actually existing and prevailing immortality and degeneracy of the protagonist:

Ever since has ill-luck haunted my lot,

***Curses, maltreatment, rape and what not,
Have been gripping cruelly my poor throat,
Bound by chains of custom, I rot; I do rot.***

In 'confessions' the poet expresses the hypocritical deeds of contemporary man who after being aware of the sitting' Ravan' in his heart tries to 'Worship Ram' makes 'excursions to temples to show off 'his 'iman', who slays 'a muslim in the name of Ram', 'being a true musalman / Blasts churches, temples for the sake of Islam. 'Female foeticide, which is the matter of grave concern, has been strongly protested by Sharma.

***Deserve I this disgrace, for disgraceful actions,
I had prevented divine will through abortions.***

Such parents treat their son as a 'proud possession'. But the son representing young generation is 'drowned in lustful recession and is oblivious to duty'.

What a son Ram was! What a son is my son .

Acts of outraging the modesty of girls is one of the most heinous crimes prevalent in the contemporary India. In poem' XVIII' he writes:

***"Politely did 'he' offer me a lift in his car ,
Meekly I nodded as my destination was far,
While his accomplice sped the car, 'he' did tear my dress.
The, fucked 'he' your Bhenji", couldn't she suppress.***

Love for foreign country and currency is today's vague. Young generation is suffering from the lack of sense of respect and admiration for its own country.

***To foreign must I go, What is left in India low?
To the lust of pounds – dollars, racial pride must bow.
Must get myself foreign citizenship, at any cost,
Marry mother, sister or daughters in papers and What not ?
Deceive my conscience for foreign currency, a lot,
I'm a proud N.R.I.,demand in India the right to vote.***

Contemporary man can do anything to get gold. Being motivated by greed and avarice the man collects hoards of gold and money by hook or by crook.

***Being a born thief, I spare no one, big or small,
I can go to any length to get gold that is over all,
I fleece who can be, don't my greed I shun,
Gold is so precious, at any cost, it must be won.***

About the poem' XL' he himself writes:

“Though India is developing fast , yet many of Indians are quite illiterate , irrational and superstitious .Newspapers often report incidents in which childless persons tend to kidnap infants and offer them as sacrifice on the altars of their duties so that they may be cured of infertility and blessed with offsprings.This poem records confessions of a woman who has perpetrated such a crime.”

Constant conflicts and frustration make the life of contemporary man a long struggle. Mental peace is lost forever.

***How much false is ego that I seek to appease?
And , it costs me a lot — God , life and eternal peace .
Let struggle be my peace and peace a struggle.***

A child when transforms into a youth gets infected with various vices. **Shaheena Khan** in her collection of poems entitled **My Bouquet (2004)** expressed this transition:

***Innocence is bartered with hypocrisy,
He learns the art of diplomacy.
He fights for an inch of land .
He nicely sleeps while others can't stand.***

Sumeet Kaur, composer of *Immortal Beauty* and *Her Beautiful Eyes* expressed the same feelings in her poem ‘**Our Thoughts Make Us**’:

***But , as he starts growing up ,
He becomes a victim of discrimination.
With depression his life is filled...
His mind then fills up with poor thoughts,
Hating everyone and loving himself alone.***

Diasporic poetess Simrat Navtej Bath, living in Oakland (USA), in her collection of poems entitled *Esoteric of Dreams (2008)* asks some overwhelming questions in ‘*Truth and Fake Happiness*’:

***We are the ‘carver’ of our clumsy Picture:
Are we the ancient Greeks of art?
Are we ancient Indians full of Philosophy?***

Man is after fake happiness which is miles away from truth. Such fake happiness is source of the sense of alienation in today’s world:

***We with our intelligence,
With our happiness to be intelligent,
Got the variety and the risk:
To be alien to our own world
And our own civilization***

*We are away from the truth,
Truth which is word
And that word is god,
God with capital G.*

There is a long chain of poets writing in the first decade of twenty first century. Scenes of deprivation, hunger, and indigence are not new to India. Lusterless existence of poor people has always been a source of sensitivities for Indian English poets. Simrat Navtej Bath in her *Esoteric of Dreams* writes that how the 'deep wild eye of beggar child filled' her 'heart with' discomfort, pain and anguishes. The sight of such boy made her feel 'the real tragedy of world's reel'. One poet questions the existence of man on earth which has partly been snatched away by technology. Another finds the hell within the heart of modern man. Prevalent social evils such as communal violence, female foeticide, constant lust for money and hypocrisy have become the source of sense of alienation and rootlessness. These poets have skilfully portrayed the picture of developing yet burning India with its directionless youth.

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