Preface

It all started with my interest in poetic recitation which by the time I passed out from college had developed into an obsession. When, in the beginning of my teaching-career at University level, I was assigned the job of teaching Indian English poetry, nothing helped me much, except this prized possession of hundred full-length poems of various new Hindi poets. Stray, incoherent, impressionistic and mutually-congratulatory articles and book-reviews written on and by these Indian English poets baffled me. At this critical juncture I drifted unconsciously towards the Hindi poems stored in my memory as a tool to teach Indian English poetry. In relatively small centres like Rewari and Rohtak (or even for that matter in big metropolitan centres) where colonial hangovers still persist and where students and colleagues tend to judge your capability on the basis of how well you roll your tongue with an anglicized accent, teaching Indian English poetry through Hindi poetry was nothing short of a blasphemy. By the high priests of English teaching, my comparatist way of teaching was scoffed at sometimes as 'unethical' and sometimes as 'unbecoming of an English teacher'. Nothing deterred me. The compulsive urge to quote Hindi poems in the class-room remained unabated. The present study is a logical outcome of this urge. It is a modest attempt to break free from the puritanical and canonical ways of teaching of Indian English literature at post-graduate level.

For self-assurance and to counter the doubts of sceptics on the very tenability of this study, I alongwith my friend Ashutosh Mohan (at present, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur) undertook a mission to visit the chosen centres of English Studies in India. In one of the seminars at Baroda, when I expressed serious doubts on the sorry state of criticism in India, Dr. G.N. Devy asked me to come out
with constructive suggestions or critical alternatives to improve the scenario. This study is my humble effort in that direction. I owe a lot to Dr. Devy for his inspiring comments.

At Dhvanyaloka, Mysore, when I disclosed the possible contours of my proposed research to Dr. C. D. Narsimhaiah, his immediate response was: “This is something near us, something our own.” Not only he dilated upon the concept of the unfinished man, he asked me to go ahead with my study. I value his blessings most. During another seminar at IIAS, Shimla, I met Meenakshi Mukherji and Harish Trivedi, the two flag-bearers of Commonwealth Literary Studies in India, along with a host of other well-known scholars like Dr. Jasbir Jain, Dr. Makarand Paranjpe, Dr. Jaidev etc. Their critical vigour has inspired me a lot. I am yet to learn their sophisticated and well-cultivated idiom of analysis.

The best research-guide is one who guides the researcher least. The open-mindedness with which Dr. M.K. Bhatnagar, Professor, Department of English, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, supervised my thesis is rare. Never did he ‘interfere’ with my work. He surprised me when he said, “Since you are involved in the study, you know more than me on the subject. I can only advise about the tenability and consistency of your argument as an objective outsider.” I am eternally grateful to him for his sagacity.

Parents do not simply influence their children, they shape them. My father (Dr.) O.P. Gupta with a Ph. D on Walt Whitman and a number of research articles on Hindi literature plus ten collections of Punjabi poetry to his credit has bequeathed me a comparative vision that informs the very model of my present study. My study is only an extension of his vision.

My three friends — Ashutosh Mohan, Anup Beniwal and Sudhir Kumar — deserve a special mention. If Ashutosh provided me the initial spurt and support, Anup helped me to sustain the tempo by way of suggesting important fillers during the middle phase of my study. The final execution of the entire study in a cogent form was facilitated by the critical comments of Sudhir.
My wife Madhu with her feminine impulse for the result always motivated me to complete the work in time. She has been an accelerating factor. I am fortunate that my two kids — Nafeesa and Tathagat — are too small to question the (non-)profitability of the (mis-)adventure their father has undertaken. Their innocence has helped me a lot.

In the end, I thank all those unmentioned (in)visible presences/ absences which en-/dis-couraged me to undertake the present study.

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