Contribution to Indian English Poetry

The poets in present study, S. C. Dwivedi, D. C. Chambial, Suresh Nath and R. C. Shukla are not only poets, they are college and university professors also. They are enriched by long teaching experience. They are not inborn poets but their long experience of teaching English literature, chiefly poetry have contributed to make them poets. They are new voices of Indian English poetry. They are the emerging poets endowed with creative fervour and experience. Their contribution to Indian English poetry is quite significant. Their writings touch the contemporary aspects of Indian society and day to day incidents of life which find emphatic place in their poems. Their themes are interrelated. They are well-versed in English language and they have selected this medium to articulate themselves. They have written and spoken of Indian milieu. Their poems set in Indian background mirror contemporary India. They have disclosed varied situations and their reactions leading to confusion arising from the conflict of traditions, customs, modernism, rural and urban traits, superstitions and science etc. They have touched the fundamental human proclivity through introspective speculation. They are more steeped in local surroundings. They have expressed the feelings, hopes and fears, dejections, joys and sorrows of common man and high gentry too. They have interpreted Indian traditions, ethos and mythology in relation to contemporary age. These new voices have gradually carved their niche near other established poets such as
Nissim Ezekiel, Kamla Das, A. K. Ramanijan, Dilip Chitre, Keki Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra, Shiv Kumar, Gieve Patel, Arun Kalatkar etc.

They crave for peace, love, friendship, sympathy and purity in relations. While S. C. Dwivedi is more steeped in scriptures and vedantic philosophy. R. C. Shukla is more a poet of reflective mood who writes his experiences of contemporary society around him. C. C. Chambial is a poet of social concern, who champions the cause of weak and down-trodden humanity. He laments at the loss of human emotions and individuality in the world of machines. Suresh Nath lends a soft voice to personal loss and social disintegration.

They have voiced social evils prevailing in contemporary Indian society such as corruption materialism, population, class distinction etc. S. C. Dwivedi is a religious minded poet. He criticises the division in the name of Ramlalah and Allah. He says in the poem “Blinding Darkness”:

Doctors loot the patients
The leaders exploit the nation.
The world is divided between Ramlalah and Allah.
The deafening noise goes on.¹

He wants unity among the people in the poem “Nectar of Unity”.

I am fed up with plurality.
I want to drink the nectar of unity.
After realizing unity
And having sunk this universe in your light.
All differences disappear.²

He has firm faith in the power of Supreme Being and that God resides in each particle of the universe. His poems are marked with religious
depth, self-mysticism and spirituality. He is a poet of enlightenment of God and His Universe. He says in the poem “See the Director”.

Observe this universe.
Whose Lord is God.
See it again and again.
Penetrate deeply into each object.
See all beings in your soul.
Searching God should be your goal.3

D. C. Chambial laments over the loss of social and human values. In the poem “The Man is Lost”, the poet is grieved to witness the overall socio-cultural anarchy and moral degradation. Like S. C. Dwivedi, D. C. Chambial says in the same context.

Men have learnt, now, to murder and live,
To loot and ravage money and morals;
Ethics and virtues silently sob in cells.
The true heirs of Satan.4

These poets have common themes. They talk of social and individual evils. S. C. Dwivedi, Suresh Nath are more concerned about political corruption. S. C. Dwivedi’s poem “Topiwallah”, is a political and social satire. He speaks of the importance of topi in Indian society. The opening of the poem is very striking.

“Dhotiwallah kamayega/Topiwallah khayega”
(Dhoti-wearer will earn/Topi-wearer will eat)
Dhoti-wearer will earn.
And topi-wearer will eat.
This is an age old principle.5

In the poem “Bechari Janta”, Suresh Nath is worried to see the political tricks of the leaders. They only make plans on papers and in
words which are hardly materialised and people helplessly watch them.

Bechari Janta!
Mute witness to
Political gimmicks
Of so-called champions
Of casteless, classless society,
Pseudo-employment planning.\textsuperscript{6}

D. C. Chambial also prays to God to entice the politicians to tread on the right path. He feels the need of their ethical orientation so that they may realise their responsibility. He asks the Lord in the poem “On This Day”.

On this day
I pray :
Lord! Come
And entice our politicians…
and teach them
a lesson in ethics -
when they
get to rape the nation next time.\textsuperscript{7}

R. C. Shukla talks of human psychology. He exhibits the reality of man-woman relationship so called extra-marital relationship. Few of his poems depict the frailty of woman, their role in extra-marital relationship and commercialisation of their charms. Moral disintegration in the contemporary society worries him. He writes in the poem “Commerce”.

There are women
Not interested in husbands
They love only nights
And enter into contracts
That naturally expire.8

Suresh Nath also writes about the man-woman relationship but his
nature of writing varies from his contemporaries. His poems in this
context are largely autobiographical. He speaks about his beloved
wife who was snatched away in prime youth. In the poem “I Carved
For”, he expresses his agony.

I craved for…
Throbbing bosom,
Far away from
Discerning eyes,
For ever – for ever.9

The poet moans over the personal loss. He feels alone and dead-alive.
His loving wife Rani has left him for heaven. He feels himself
betrayed. In the poem “Why Did You Betray Me”, he says:

I am a living corpse
Nowhere to go and nowhere to park.
The angel of Death has knocked
Escape, I cannot, he has blocked.10

These four poets have talked of human suffering- their pains and
helplessness. They are social conscious poets. Their poetry carries a
sense of dissatisfaction, despair, frustration and anguish. Their poetry
is an outpouring of their longings and yearnings. Their greatest
achievement lies in their ability to articulate human experiences and
emotions.
In the poem “Balia”, D. C. Chambial is anguished to see the tears of the parents of a sailor who drowned in the sea. In a very poignant manner he presents the pain and agony of a mother.

“O my Balia! O my son!
Where are you?
When will you come?”…
To light the pyre
of his old father,
of his old mother.
B-a-b-u
Is our Balia dead.?¹¹

R. C. Shukla, in the poem “Our Life is a Drama of Acts Five”, shows the pathos in the tragedy i.e. life.

We are all tragic heroes in our own way
Have our hamartia
For which we suffer
And cause a catharsis.¹²

These poets though individual in their context have certain common themes. They have penned many aspects of society such as – evils, vacuum, political corruption, human weaknesses, spiritualism, pain and agony. Their contribution to Indian English poetry is remarkable.

All these four poets are well versed in English and in other Indian languages as Hindi, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri & Pahari etc. The impact of these languages is quite clearly visible in their poems. Their poetic diction is simple and clear with frequent use of vernacular words. Their thoughts emerge and leave an indelible impact on the mind of the reader. They have the impact of English and American writers too since they have studied and taught English and other English
literatures for long years. The references of T. S. Eliot, Shakespeare, John Keats, Socrates, Francis Bacon, W. H. Auden, Lord Alfred Tennyson, Earnest Hemingway, Words Worth and Charles Lamb are found in their poems. They are well-steeped in Indian mythology and literatures. Richness of imagery and symbols is wondrous. In this regard their contribution to Indian English literature is unique.

Their Contribution to Teaching

Besides being poets these four scholars have been teaching English literature particularly poetry as professors in colleges and universities. They chose English as medium to express themselves. They have imparted a spectrum of daily life in an unobtrusive personal vein. All these four poet-professors are originated from humble backgrounds and have assimilated creative anxieties with their teachings in the classroom. They have great influence of Milton, wordsworth, Eliot and Tagore. Their impact is clearly visible in their works. Teaching literature offers a teacher an atmosphere to grow his analytical and creative attributes. Poetry, the favoured, pedagogical genre of the new critics, has become a language laboratory of irony, tone, paradox, symbolism and imagery. These four teachers of poetry testify the joy their work has brought to their lives. Their objective is to introduce the students the development of literary tastes and to train them how to think, read, analyse and write like scholars. They also learn literary methodology. Thus they may develop cognitive skills as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. While teaching these four poets have given voice to their pains and
sufferings to show the students that academic growth is as much significant as sympathy, empathy and insight, reason, hypothesis and deduction. When the teachers as well as poets encounter a phenomenon large as war, terror, violence, they connect it to other parts of experiences. On the whole their teaching provides a depth of understanding the life. They teach that poetical imagination is not merely a flight of fancy, it is concerned with the basic issues of life.

The objective of teaching literature is to enable the students to enjoy the wider thoughts and the emotional pleasure. They should be acquainted with literary persons, their works, their thoughts and experience to help them realize their own. They must create standard of taste for certain things that are worthy. They should enable them to select and appreciate beautiful lines and the ideas they contain from prose, poetry or what ever they read. Poetry gives pleasure. The aim of teaching poetry as its literary aspect is limited to giving the pupil idea of rhyme and rhythm, of meter and modulation. Poetry does take liberty with the medium of language, its structure and phonetics to achieve poetic effect. This apart, poetic expression far exceeds the thought and pattern of expression. The outcome based on the poetic inputs are qualitatively different and leave a deeper impression in human mind, heart and soul.

Poetry is not acceptance of frustration or helplessness; it is the acceptance of reason and refinement of sensibility which connects man with an entire domain of feelings and compassion. To appreciate a single line of poetry one has to feel poetry on own pulse. It is entirely an intimate affair of experience. These four poets have great
experience of human existence. They have penned it in poetic forms and brought their mind and heart out. These eminent teachers love poetry and have full justice to their job as teaching poetry. They are conscientious artists gifted with art of teaching. Their wide range of knowledge, sensitivity and ability has transformed their feelings into vibrant notes of poetry.

The fact that all four poets teach literature sets them apart from other writers. Their creative fervor has undoubtedly been nourished upon their experience as the literary scholars, but it has been reciprocated since their creative vision enlightened their classes. It has been a wondrous combination of learning and creativity. A teacher gifted with creative spark is a boon for his students.

To sum up, these four poets – S. C. Dwivedi, D. C. Chambial, Suresh Nath and R. C. Shukla represent new voices of Indian English poetry. They belong to the new poetic clan of Indian English literature who are absolutely Indian in feel and spirit.

References


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