INTERVIEW WITH D. C. CHAMBIAL

Gopal Dass: Living at a remote place, how did you get a great success in poetry?

D.C. Chambial: Wherever one may live, one has to strive hard to achieve one’s objective in life. If one remains contemplating and musing about one’s success and does not make efforts to realise the goal, one’s wishes may remain only airy castles. So what one decides, one puts in his best and objective will certainly be achieved. Here I remember the lines of a British poem:

Success is at the top boys
Waiting there until
Patient, plodding, plucky boys
Have mounted up the hill.

During my school days, I thought of writing poetry and started writing it vehemently: my emotions and passions overflowed at that time. After having written a poem, I used to show it to those who were seniors and knew about poetry as a subject in depth. In this manner, I continued writing diligently, sending poems to various editors of journals and magazines. In 1979, my first poem, “Echo”, was published in international magazine, SKYLARK, published from Aligarh and edited by Baldev Mirza, himself a poet of great standing. Since then, there is no looking back.

GD: What are your other modes/genres of expression?

DCC: Mostly, I have written poetry in English. I also write in Hindi and Pahari language of Himachal Pradesh. I also have one collection of my Hindi poems entitled “Himapaat”, which was published in 1983. I have also written short stories in Hindi and English besides a radio-play for Aakaashvani Shimla, which was broadcast in 1986.

GD: As a poet-critic, please define what poetry is and who is a poet?

DCC: Poetry, for me, is what stirs one’s mind and sets it into action/contemplation about the object/idea that has given a sudden jolt to the otherwise ordinary mind on an ordinary moment of time. For example, William Blake’s mind was stirred to see a tiger which resulted in his poem, “The Tyger” the sudden vision of daffodils to Wordsworth lead to the composition of ‘Daffodils’.
For better delineation of the concept, you can read my poem, “Poetry”, (CP, p.19) that will tell you how it appears to the poet. A poem, for me, is the result of suffused emotions passionately expressed in the heat of the moment.

A poet is one who has the capacity to take his readers in embrace of his imagination and make the feel and experience the same exultation of joy and sorrow that he has felt and experienced at the time of his composition. I think, poetry must leave enough space of the reader to contemplate to reach the height of poet’s imagination. The efforts, so put in, give an additional delight to the readers. I, in my case, don’t like flat poetry that puts the thing/idea but leaves nothing for the reader to interpret/imagine/ contemplate/surmise. For me the poet is one who conveys his experiences/ideas with the help of concrete images and in the short possible words but without confusing the reader takes him into confidence.

GD: You are a poet of suffering humanity. Would you, please, throw some light on it?

DCC: Human life is an amalgam of joy and sorrow, pleasure and plight, happiness and sorrow. And both these aspects of life cannot be severed from each other as two sides of a coin or day from night. However, in life it plays see-saw. There are some who are fortunate and happy. There are some who are unfortunate and do not get even the bare minimum of food, cloth and shelter to sustain life, yet life goes on for them too. Such people may be called as unfortunate and poor. They always look towards those who have these things of sustaining life aplenty.

This gap of sustainable elements of life has resulted from the social system of capitalism which leaves little for those who, despite their best efforts, are unable to get what they deserve. They are destined to live in sheer misery/poetry. The spectacle of such people evokes compassion in heart and I try to delineate their abject situation with a view to eradicate it. My feel is for those who make an effort to earn their livelihood by honest means and not for those who have made it a vocation to live in destitution and beg for keeping body and soul together, like animals, in spite of being able bodied and desist from physical labour.

GD: What according to you, accounts for the loss of values in the present day world?

DCC: Loss of contentment and Mammon worship is the root cause of the loss of values in human life at present. There is a blind race for
money. Every thing is interpreted in terms of money that a man possesses. Money has the power even to earn respect in society/howsoever morally sound a man may be, if he has no money, he is looked down upon in the society. Therefore, men and women too, pursue a life of hectic activities so that more and more money can be amassed. The best examples are our politicians: they join politics merely for the sake of making money without caring for the weal of the common man. The voter remains in their view only till the canvassing for the election doesn’t end; thereafter, money overrides all their values, ideals and ideas (with an apology to those, the very few, if they are who care for the public welfare). Hundreds of our politicians can be counted on finger tips and bureaucrats follow suit. Hardly there is one who is not bitten by this bug of modernity, craving for money through fair (very rare) of foul (mostly) means. All moral values are considered, these days, the possessions of cowards. Daily we hear and read about people being caught red-handed while taking bribe, being punished, yet the craze doesn’t end and the game goes on.

GD: What are your views about Religion and faith?
DCC: Religion was discovered by the seers in the very ancient times to regulate life in a nice way, so that none suffers in the society. A healthy religion helps the needy, generates satisfaction, peace and tension-free atmosphere. While today’s religions are water-tight compartments, no trespassing out of the bounds of one religion is recommended and tolerated. All present religions have become hoax and most of the religious heads are parasites thriving on the people’s faith. In the recent past many such heads have got involved in sex scandals and murders to enjoy life and protect their thrones. Haven’t they?

I believe that all men are born alike. None is born with any religion in his/her blood; it is the society and the family in which one is born converts him/her to a particular religion and prawns in him a particular creed. My religion is HUMANISM – a religion that treats all human beings as equal and that, too, is my FAITH.

GD: What is Individualism?
DCC: Individualism is where thought or an activity centers round an individual alone. In literature it is maintained that every individual creative writer is different from every other creative artist. No two persons/writers/artists are alike. What differentiates one from the other constitutes that being’s individuality. The differentiation lies
in ideology and philosophy. Whenever two writers appear to propound analogous philosophy their techniques are quite apart from each other and which sets them apart and imparts them individualism. It also connotes individuality, uniqueness, distinctiveness or/and eccentricity. Have I been close to your concept of individualism?

GD: Your poetry has regional colour. Would you please elaborate?
DCC: The term “Regionalism” was coined to describe “regional novel”. “A regional writer is one who concentrates much attention on a particular area and uses it and the people who inhabit it as the basis for his or her stories” or novels. “Such a locale is likely to be rural and/or provincial.” (J.A. Cuddon)

So far as my poetry is concerned, certainly there is rural ambience. If that can be interpreted as regionalism, it is alright. It is always the critic who assigns this or that label/tag to a particular type of writing. In my poetry, necessarily, I drive material from my vicinity but if the characters suffer it is not only the characters, or so to say inhabitants, of that particular area or region who undergo suffering under such conditions but the people all over the globe suffer equally under parallel situations. So, my region melts and transcends physical boundaries to reach the farthest locales on this Earth. Robert Frost too has been regional poet under these observations.

I think REGIONALISM holds good for fiction and not poetry. Nonetheless, there is no binding on critics to think what they think.

GD: What do you think about your poetic collection, Collected Poems? A comment on each part will be illuminating.
DCC: Dear critic, if I am to write about my own poetry what is left for the learned critics to do. I don’t want to comment because I want to know the varied interpretations the critics allow these poems and what ideas they form about them. I hope you must have read my poems and formed some idea about them. Make your own judgment about them – good or bad whatever you think them to be...

GD: Something about your struggle in life.
DCC: Life itself is a struggle and whatever we achieve that is by dint of struggle. I did B.Sc. in Bio-sciences from Govt. College, Dharamshala in 1970 and could not continue my study for post graduation. I had to join B. Ed. Which I passed in 1971. I joined HP
education department as a Science Master in March 1972 after qualifying the Himachal Pradesh Public Service Commission. Thereafter I pursued my studies privately, I did MA, M.Phil.(English), and then PhD from HP University, Shimla. I also served as lecturer in School cadre (selection through HPPSC) for about two years and finally was selected by HPPSC for college cadre in 1989. In all these interviews and tests conducted by the HPPSC , I always topped the list of successful candidates. I have successfully taught in College; guided about a dozen M.Phil. and half a dozen Ph.D. scholars.

GD : As a poet what message would you like to give to society?
DCC : I wish that our society develops sane humanitarian sensibility: a society in which no deserving individual suffers. There is justifiable distribution of economy and every needy gets bare minimum to sustain life. I don’t want to see stunned eyes staring at the skies.

So far as my literary career is concerned it is all before you.

*****
INTERVIEW WITH R. C. SHUKLA

Gopal Dass: As a poet how did you reach on such heights?

R.C. Shukla: I did not make any effort to reach heights. These heights are the result of my experiences and imaginations as you say.

GD: What are your motivational sources?

RCS: My sensitivity what is happening around me has been chiefly responsible for writing the poems.

GD: Why did you choose poetry to express yourself?

RCS: I chose to express myself through poetry chiefly because I possess poetic mind. I have written some prose pieces also but those prose pieces are virtually poetic in their colours. I must also say that one gifted with a poetic mind finds it very convenient to express himself through poetry.

GD: What is your basic conception of women?

RCS: I consider woman is a very strong force not only in the life of man but also in the society as a whole. If gifted with Indian cultural values a woman can perform miracles for the welfare of family. As a person I have never appreciated the cult of the so-called feminism which has become responsible for the downfall of our females.

GD: Do you believe the type of feminism that has been popularized by modern intellectuals?

RCS: I do not have any faith in the so-called feminism which unfortunately instructs the modern woman to look at the man with the disdainful eye because she has been taught and told that for centuries. She has been exploited and tortured by man and a such she has to come out of that position in which she was dominated by man. Such an idea of man-woman relationship advanced by modern intellectuals is not going to benefit the Indian society. Which always emphasised on the ideal relationship between the husband and his wife?
GD: What do you think of woman of today because you have written a lot on man-woman relationship?

RCS: There is no deny that the woman of today (Indian woman) has unfortunately, not remained the source of inspiration which she used to be. She has been unduly influenced by the notion of individual liberty. This notion, imported from the west, as a matter of fact, stimulated her to stand as the rival of man. It is really very tragic that the idea of companionship is fast disappearing from the mind of the woman at present.

GD: What do you think of romantic love having extra-marital relationship?

RCS: While talking of romantic love I keep in my mind the instinctive demands of a man and woman. Although ethically it is wrong to go for an extra-marital relationship yet it can not be denied that such a craving is present both in man and woman.

GD: In your views what is Platonic love?

RCS: I have no faith in Platonic love because love is always based on some physical realities. It does not prosper through the vagaries of fancies.

GD: What is the poetry in your own view? There are two extremes one of Wordsworth poetic conception others of T.S. Eliot what are your reactions to these two extremes? Where do you place yourself between them?

RCS: I do not think it is desirable to go for a flat definition of poetry. A poetic inspiration depends on the state of the mind of poet. Many times a poet is overtaken by the flux of his emotions and on the contrary many times he is governed by the understanding of his intellect. I personally do not feel that consciously I have been influenced by what has been said either by WordsWorth or by T.S Eliot. I can say one thing more that for me poetry is an exercise through which I endeavor to explore myself.

GD: You are bilingual poet in Hindi & English. Kindly throw light on the aspect of your poetic creative idiom. Do you translate your thought from your native language into English or English automatically comes in your mind?
RCS: I must be honest in admitting that English does not come to me as naturally as Hindi because English has not been my mother tongue. But it does not be that my poems in English are the translations of my thoughts in English. Since I have taught English literature for a pretty long time. The language does not appear to me something alien. So for as the creative idiom is concerned I am guided by my imagination which welcomes the English background as much it welcomes that of Hindi.

GD: Generally critics think that you have composed poems only on man-women relationship they miss contemporariness in your poetry. Are they prejudiced? What is your reaction to their charge against your poetry?

RCS: I have written a large number of poems on man-women relationship because I think that this relationship is the most significant relationship in the society. They who say that I am confined only to this subject are probably prejudiced in their thoughts. I have written a sufficient number of poems on the subject of death. I have also written on the subject of alienation in the present society. I have also expressed my views on the rising graph of corruption and injustice in the Indian society. I must say one thing more. My poems on man-woman relationship are different from what other poets have written. These poems are a great efforts to understand the psychology of the woman. They are, at the same time, metaphysical in their meanings.

GD: What type of message do you like to convey to society?

RCS: As a matter of fact a message is given by saint or philosopher. I am too small poet to give any message to the society in which I am living even then I can say that I have a great belief in intellectual honesty which can certainly keep us more satisfied than we are.

*****
INTERVIEW WITH S. C. DWIVEDI

Gopal Dass: You are poet as well as a professor. How did you achieve such name and fame?

S.C.Dwivedi: The great credit must go to my parents and teachers whatever I have done in my life is due to their inspiration. My father was a student of eminent scholars. He founded a college and became its Principal my mother was a student of Smt. Mahadevi Verma and adored Subhash Chand Bose. She was inspired by the revolutionary fervor of Bose. My parents were eminent teachers who took part in the freedom struggle and indicated the habit of reading in my childhood. My parents talked about literary gods of their times which must have influenced me. My parents and teachers recited poetry and wrote poetry occasionally. They inspired me to write poetry.

GD: Why did you choose poetry to express yourself?

SCD: I want to serve as a ‘Setu’ as a friend of the poor. I feel guilty of an era which suffer from hundreds of social, political, economic and cultural problems. I want to be an ambassador of peace, culture, refinement and delight. I want to be a doctor of a suffering age. I want to stop all wars, riots, quarrels, apartheid, untouchability, hatred, mafia-culture, criminal-culture and reconcile all the negative and positive forces which disturb our inner and outer world. To be a poet is to be a practitioner of an eco-dharma. Eco-dharma is like the long road flooded with light on which humanity can find its meaningful existence. My poetry offers a new awakening of a beautiful present world and a great promise and assurance for the future generation. I believe in the ‘Vasudeva Kutumbhkam’. I am a responsible citizen and my group of poets has made sincere efforts to establish peace, prosperity, progress, joy and spirituality. So I have chosen the poetry to express my feelings.
GD: You have marked your poetry by various allusions, images from Indian legends, Vedas and Upnishads. Please tell me the reasons?

SCD: “Only Connect” is my slogan as a poet. I have connected the rural and the urban, the modern and the post-modern, the Vedic and the non-vedic things. I am a progressive pundit. I am not a ponga-pundit. Many Indian English poets are like frogs in a dark and deep well. To me man is important and the philosophies and ideologies which aim to uplift mankind are important. I have been teaching, reading and writing for more than four decades. As a poet, I have been influenced by Vedas, Upnishads, Purans, Mahakavyas, Bhagwadgeeta and Bible. Words and observation are coming to me naturally. Seeing, feeling and saying is poetry. I have been involved in this process honestly.

GD: You have been honoured by several awards…

SCD: (i) Rahul Sankritayayan Award for Bhojpuri Book.
(ii) George Abrahim Grierson Award.
(iv) Bhojpuri Shri.
(v) Chetna Shri & other national and international awards & honours.

GD: As a poet of Sanskrit, Bhojpuri, Hindi & English, please throw light on your creative idiom?

SCD: I had Psychology, Sanskrit and English literature in B.A. as optional subjects. My parents were lovers of Sanskrit, Hindi and Bhojpuri languages. My elder brother Ramesh Chandra Dwivedi now a Sadhu of Naga sect is also a multilingual poet. My parents got the training of multilingualism from Professor Ganga Nath Jha and Professor Anant Nath Jha. So multilingualism and multiculturalism is in my blood. Sanskrit, Hindi, Bhojpuri tones, idioms come to me naturally.

GD: What is spiritualism?

SCD: I am an Indian and to love India - its flora and fauna and Indian heritage is spiritualism. My book of poems
Epiphanies and other poems is a book of spiritualism. It came as a product of my lectures delivered in Arya Samaj. The book has been nationally and internationally acclaimed as a great book of spiritualism. Desire, anger, pride, greed and ignorance are our enemies and also of Dharma. Any practitioner of poetry must fight against these inner terrorists. Poets are the great guides of the humanity. Poetry aims to uplift humanity all the time. We are living in a tormented time. The role of poetry has been vital in fighting against poverty and exploitation.

GD: You have insisted on love. What is it?

SCD: Love is the most popular thing in our world. Ninety nine percent people of India love nature, man, women and children. The obstacles in love are such delusions as desire, anger, pride, ignorance, arrogance, superstitions, untouchability and hatred. I say man must love each other or die. Individuals, nations and communities must love one another. A poet is an envoy of love. He is a diplomat whose diplomacy is love. My poems are epistles of love. I have practiced love, positivity, compassion, truth, beauty, sympathy for more than 40 years as a poet and professor. We must help each other or die. We must support each other or die.

GD: What are your experiences at Allahabad University as professor of English literature?

SCD: I have been teaching at Allahabad University for the last 36 years. I have taught in my prestigious university which is known as Oxford of the East. I joined the university in 1972. Various other professors have been associated with my department. The department has been a suitable place for reading, writing teaching, researches, debates, development of critical spirit, conversation and exchange of ideas. This is the best place on earth for practical, critical, scholarly, social or any other type of growth. I learnt to stand on my own feet here in this university. English department of Allahabad University is full of many literary activities. I am proud of my city, my university, my family and my nation.
GD: As a translator do you think translation is the best method to learn English. Do you translate your English poems or write directly?

SCD: No one can become a modern poet without the habit of translation. Eliot, Pound did it. Many did it. Keats did. I write in English, Hindi and Bhojpuri languages regularly. I have translated my Hindi poets and poems into English and many English poets and their poetry into Hindi. I write in all these three languages freely, frankly, speedily and effortlessly. I agree with you that translation helps in learning English. I take it as a medium, expression and transposition of culture.

GD: As a poet what message do you like convey to the society?

SCD: We should make our earth a happier and better place. All wars, riots, quarrels must go. Man is a moral agent and he must behave with a sense of accountability and responsibility. Swaraj is our birth right, so be Indian and buy Indian. Readers are suggested to love Himalayas, Taj Mahal, Taj Hotel, Sansad Bhawan, Khjuraho and all the places connected with Indian heritage. We should bring paradise on earth by becoming happier, more moral and more responsible.

*****
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Creative Works of the Poets


Secondary Sources

Critical Works

• Birendra Pandey, Indian Poetry in English, New Delhi: 2003.
• Bruce King, Modern Indian Poetry in English, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
• Dr. R. L. Varshneya, Indo-Anglian Literature, Bareilly: Student Store, 1986.
• Dr. Raghukul Tilak, New Indian English Poets and Poetry, New Delhi: Rama Brothers Pvt. Ltd. 2007.


**Journals**

• *Contemporary Vibes*, Chandigarh.

• *Creative Writing and Criticism*, Sikandrabad.

• *Explorations in Indian English Poetry*, New Delhi.

• *Kohinoor*, Begusarai.

• *The Journal of Indian Writing in English: Gulberga*.

• *The Points of View*, Ghaziabad.

• *The Vedic Path*, Haridwar.

• *The Quest*, Ranchi.

*****