Chapter-VII
Towards Conclusion

Is it still ironical that in all the (obviously western) poetics of the postmodern, the most glaring omission is poetry? Is it ironical that the postmodern, which emerged with/as the promise of a radical break from western philosophy, of an epistemic break with the history of a logocentric discourse, too has been all but appropriated by that very discourse, in a new simulacral avatar of death-of-theory/philosophy? Is it 'ironical', isn't it, that we still give this word, 'ironical', the sense of an irony after it has been robbed of all the possibility of 'meaning', by, 'ironically', the very bourgeois liberal philosophers like Richard Rorty who relegate the ironists to the sort of people who attain the "realization that anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed, and ....renunciation of the attempt to formulate criteria of choice between final vocabularies ...the position which Sartre called "meta-stable"—never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves."¹ 

So, they tell us they will keep coming up with newer meanings of irony, of literature, like, for example, Rorty's liberal "ironists" who "face up to the contingency of their beliefs; (they) are aware that among these lie such things as 'their own hope that suffering will be diminished."² Or, for another example, John Barth's 'Literature of Exhaustion'. We do not take either Barthian road to despair or, for that matter, the Rortian antidote to it, the ametaphysical (we tend to miss this 'a' like we do that of 'difference' when we see-hear-read our poetry) "hope that suffering will be diminished." We are neither ironists nor liberals, nor for that matter, Lyotardian or Baudrillardian postmodernists. We 'do' politics or
metaphysics or physics or what you will, with our anger and pain; we write
our blood and tears; we read our wounds and songs.

Our poetry has neither surface nor depth, neither reason nor feeling,
neither physics nor metaphysics, neither immanence nor transcendence,
neither realism nor romanticism, neither modernism nor postmodernism,
neither univalence nor multivalence, neither symphony nor polyphony,
neither time nor timeless, neither History nor Geography:

Neither is our poetry 'defined within' dialectics, differands, aporias
or simulacras. Our poetry is not just a promise but an act, both real and
other-than-real and also the other of the Real, of living and giving, of both
tracing the histories of absent memories and gracing spaces of honest surat
(attention) with 'presence' of shabad, not just promise of 'logos'. Our poetry
seeks out both the seekers and the satans, the faqeers and fakes, the Blakes
and the Bushes. It does not formulate but does justice, and even more,
forbids the repentant. It has both kruna and krodh, birha and vidroh
mourning and anger; it loves and rebukes in the same breath, in the same
rhythm but different tone of its expletive or its bani. How much can 'it'
'speak' in the closed, narrow space of a academic thesis? It is not enough of
a space, circumscribed as it is by the codes, co-ordinates, courses designed
primarily by the western academy whose basic paradigms, Modernist or
Postmodernist, cannot be rejected or remade by our poetry, can only sometimes be problematized, but generally provide good measures to rate and read our poetry.

Now even when the western intellectual has run out of steam of (un)consciousness, we like to consume his endless repetitiveness, rather than invite him to enter our 'stream' of sahaj-shabad-surat-shreer-sach' out of which it may well get a poetic of not only the fine line dividing the 'in' from the 'out', but the seamless seam(s) adding and multiplying the 'in(s)' with the 'out(s)'. The western theorist cannot think outside the binary structure of logocentrism; he simply cannot outthink himself. Derrida was justifiably emphatic about the difference of his voice and 'his' deconstruction running the risk of appropriation by the centralizing western metaphysics of presence. Jameson, even after having 'proved' postmodernism as only 'the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', cannot outthink the trap he himself has fallen into. The "two concepts of modernism and realism", he says, "are not on all fours with each other. … the two terms, whether considered to be concepts or categories, are drawn from two unrelated systems, and like those two well-known lines, which , prolonged into infinity, never meet, they are incommensurable with each other. Modernism is an aesthetic category and realism is an epistemological one; the truth claim of the latter is irconcilable with the formal dynamic of the former. The attempt to combine the two into a single master narrative must therefore necessarily fail,..." Jameson simply believes that the categories of the aesthetic and the epistemological are 'natural' given and cannot overlap each other. The "truth claim" and "the formal dynamic" are mutually exclusive and any narrative which attempts to subvert the 'master narrative' of their mutual exclusiveness by making them speak to each other will run the risk of earning the rebuke of the only legitimate master narrative of 'a priori' aesthetic and epistemological
categorical imperatives. All you are allowed to do is a Rortian redescription of Cartesian or Kantian Rationalism. It commands the whole universe with its natural right to power, and its liberal humanism will assign art and knowledge, poetry and science their respective fields, and will heavily police the borderline with its intellectual guards who will be always busy fully armed on both the right and the left, to stop the inflow or overflow of philosophy and poetry into each other, the influx from the one into the other, lest the borderline, and so the need which constitutes the master narrative of rationalism, should be erased or even blurred. Jameson will do better to read our poet-thinkers who had 'sung' the very 'question' out of existence, its ontological relevance, necessity or even possibility, of 'metaphysics of presence' out of the realm of possibility of its being posed from within any logic whatsoever:

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\text{Sahs sianhpa lakh hohe ta ik na challe nal)}
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But Jameson is so bound to the rationalist logic, cultural space, or existential habit or political commitment that he cannot summon the courage and energy to plunge into "the unexplored and undiscovered", "passionately to seek" beyond the Ennui or the Absurd, for the risky adventure of poetic thinking, especially the kind done here, in the "dynamic truth" of the fourth dimension of Punjabi poetry, lying beyond the thesis-antithesis-synthesis, the western aesthetics and the
undecidability of deconstruction, of three\textsuperscript{gu\textsubscript{am}}s\textsuperscript{satyam-Sivam-Sundram},
and also beyond them, too.

Pash's poetry becomes, and not just poses, the very crisis of representing what is always already getting lost in the very discourses and institutions which come into being in the name of representing it. His poetry happens as, is a singular event of, the problematic of representation which is also, as the general crisis of representing any singularity, "generic to the postmodern spirit of late capitalism." \textsuperscript{7} It is not the blissful pain of an intensely lived moment, as in Shiv's poetry, melting into a melodious rhythm, but the angry pain of not having been allowed enough freedom to intensely live out the moment. If the anger 'appears' obscene to the reader unused to a new poetry, so be it. If the anger finds itself translated into obscenities which violate the very aesthetic of Modernist search for the absolutely new, these obscenities mouthed for the first time in Punjabi poetry, constitute a new aesthetic of rejection of an obscene aesthetic which exists only as a covering up of its failure to represent the obscene repression of the angry, may be grotesque, cry for human freedom:

\begin{verbatim}
Eh geet main ohna gungia nu dena hai
Jinha nu geeta di kadar hai
Per jinha nu tuhade bhane gaona nahin pugda
Je tuhade kol nahin hai koi bol, koi geet
Mainu bakhan dewo main ki bakda haan)
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{327}
The absolute need for making this song does not submit itself to any aesthetics or discourse of literature. The poet feels frustrated and angry at not finding any 'substantial' sounds or signs to make, to materialize, this song. The frustration and anger write themselves into a rhythm and diction which flout all norms and definitions of poetry. "Here words are no longer signs, nor appellations they only touch the page and pierce the writing. Here it is forced, turned away, tempered, unoccupied. Literature is fucked. There is nothing more to describe, and nothing to name. Obscenities have no meaning. Poetry must not deliver obscenity; neither must it deliver us from it."  

It is a postmodern with difference, another possibility of a yet-to-come engaged postmodern which is not simply content with a pervasive textuality and Poststructuralist banishment of the meaning along with the Structuralist exile of the referent from the realm of sign.

The contemporary Punjabi poets like Jaswant Deed and Jaswant Zafar are the new paradigms of the postmodern, of the real, and not just simulacral or signficational, impact of what irony is doing today (not the armchair, left or right, Jamesonian - Rortian politics) – changing us, making us better prepared with each reading of their each poem to fight both their postmodernist consumerism and Eagletonian anti-consumerism.

Whereas Punjabi poets like Savi, have failed to ground their reception of the postmodern play of desire into the different 'reality' of their own living culture and language, it is Shiv who raises the desire for the other to the level of a birha, a mourning which both echoes and extends the intertext of the birha, lived and sung by our sufi poets like Sheikh Farid, Bulleh Shah and Sultan Bahu. Savi, overwhelmed by the simulacrum of the western postmodernism, lets the desire overflow the possibility of an impossible mourning, the blissful pain of a birha so that the rational 'I' can keep playing with it, consuming it, yielding to every
chance of consummation, with nothing left to feed the mourning on, to grow the birha, its painful bliss. Shiv, on the other hand, knows that consumerist tendency will corrupt the 'almost pure' (contaminated only by the memory of a 'kiss' of the other) birha which constitutes the very possibility and point of being alive for the poet.

It is this tension/conflict between the impossibility of the possibly continous self-consuming desire and the possibility of an impossible exteriorization of a self-lacerating mourning, the birha, which generates another chance, a possibility of an impossible chance, for the postmodern to be 'a difference' it always seeks, a difference it sought but did not find in 'the' western postmodernism.

Shiv, paradoxically, creates a site for the postmodern to happen, to come to presence, even before (in his poem Maye Ni Maye, dated 1961) it took its birth and name in the other house, the other discourse, the philosophical discourse of the other which does not yield any place to any other, not an inch to the other that breathes life into its head, gives the heart of poetry, which pumps blood into its logocentric veins. The postmodern almost died as it cried for fresh air in the coffin of western theory. Had Shiv not heard its cry, and given it the possibility of a voice and a life in poetry, in Punjabi poetry before even its infantile arrival in an alien world, where would been the hope of its survival after it had been driven from every pillar to every post (post modernism, post colonialism, post structuralism), from architecture to culture, from fiction to cinema, from text to simulacra? Its desire for differand, differance, and death of theory was all but killed ironically by its own foster father, the western Discourse, had it not been provided another difficult-to deconstruct body by its 'real' (how/what can she be other than real) mother, poetry, Punjabi poetry being her first call to the lost child. He did lend his ear for a while to the boy called Derrida whom the mother had sent to help him. However
the boy himself was fascinated and frightened by many spectres and
eventually lost his way and voice. What now is the way out of the
simulacral hell into which the child has 'fallen'. Poetry sends now different
voices from Punjab, one of its many, each of them singularly different,
habitats, to call the child to another home, a fresh site, to a difference more
different than the differands or differances it has 'known' in/as the name of
difference.
References
8. Pash, *op.cit.*, p. 87