
A Glimpse Into Indian English Poetry

The selection of poetry for this issue is not intended to be a representative of the poetry written in India but to showcase these works to enable a reader to get an idea of contemporary Indian poetry. Given the linguistic situation in India, it is not possible for a particular poet to speak competently about poetry in all languages. It is the contact with reality that poetry intends to make and as words approach the world around us, to make sense of it; one realizes the silences that are a part of this world. It becomes the responsibility of poetry to understand those silences and acknowledge its contribution to poetry. Silences can take various forms—in Neelum Saran Gour's article on home or be it Sukrita Paul Kumar's work where 'words themselves get used to make the poem wordless'. Nishat Zaidi and Rumki Basu look at contemporary Bengali and Urdu poetry respectively—opening a window to the new/emerging Bengali and Urdu poets and on those that await translations so as to be read/heard by many. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra in his short note on poetic imagination cuts through all the frivolities to look at what underlies/constitutes poetry.

The books that have been reviewed here are varied in their approaches towards how they perceive reality; how they make their adjustments with the silences and how words are used to redesign language where worlds and words meet halfway. Lakshmi Kannan's review looks at silences—which can be tranquil as well as turbulent. Nandini Varma reveals the intertwining of memories with the lives lived and living while Sakshi Wason unravels the movement from a place where one belongs towards a feeling of alienation and varying consciousness. One thing to keep in mind while approaching poetry is to have an open mind and as poet Udayan Vajpeyi aptly puts it—'whoever has decided to live securely in the castle of definite ideas should keep away from poetry.' Manik Sharma's review brings to light poetry for the young minds, and looks at trauma and nostalgia (the desire to lose oneself)—the interweaving of both which seeps through the second poetry collection.

Ankita Anand observes the shifting hierarchies in relationships, how life is lived and continues to be lived while Aditi Anigras in her review deconstructs the concept of an alien. Language acting as a defence mechanism is looked at by Aditya Mani Jha in his review while Uttaran Das Gupta's review examines the cyclical language that has been used by the poet; a new language that has been created. Addressing multiple readerships and bilingualism is Radha Chakravarty's review that contemplates how language reaches out to people. Kadambari Mishra goes straight to the heart of what poetry is all about—'their power as a medium of expression.' Sucharita Sengupta beautifully merges the past and the present in her review while Yamini ruminates over a wide spectrum of poetry—a compendium of urban/natural spaces and memory/history. Abrona Lee Pandi Aden through her review opens up the vulnerable side of the poet and connects him closely with the things around him. Deepthi Bhardwaj explores the various facets of life, picking up emotions as generated by moments that are revealed in this book while Pallavi Narayan recognizes the personal moments—memorializing them lest they are forgotten. Randhir Khare looks at life slipping away 'just as seasons give way to another' in his review. Amitendu Bhattacharya looks at the fluidity of time and how this has been treated in the book he reviews.

Kazim Ali's *All One's Blue* is included in this issue—although Kazim is an American poet, of an Indian descent and was taught by poet Agha Shahid Ali. In one of his interviews, Kazim mentions how he has been criticized by American writers for writing that is 'much too dependent on an Indian cultural context' while criticized by Indian writers for 'being too interested in a Western Romantic sensibility.' Sonali Pattnaik unravels this pendulum like state in her review while looking at the 'revisionist engagement with mythology'. Yogesh Patel reviews two books where thematically, alienation and displacement preoccupies both the poets but while Nagra reconstructs language, Bhatt re-examines the language in the cultural context in which it exists. Debjani Chatterjee's review examines the poet's position as an immigrant, and questions her relationship with places and people in this context. For Indu Mallah the book becomes a journey to harmonize life at a spiritual and physical level as she looks at the poet's journey from India to France and back to India again.

Haiku has made its presence felt in India through various Indian languages like Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Assamese to name a few and Saleem Peeradina cogitates on Haiku poetry in India as also the emotions and its interweaving into the poems by the poet who experiments with haiku and the ghazal form to express herself. Talking about emotions, love finds a name and place for itself in two books that are a part of this edition. Sujay Thakur mulls over the definition of love and redefines it while Nabanipa Bhattacharjee's review reflects on the all-consuming *prem* in the 200 odd translated poems. And finally there is a shift to the teleological development of Urdu poetry—from Khusrau to Bollywood which Aratrika Das celebrates in detail.

I will again remind the readers that these books are glimpses into what is a part of a wider definition of Indian English poetry and a single issue cannot encapsulate a lot many poetry books that deserve as much attention as these have. The commissioning of books and guest editing has been a learning experience. My heartfelt thanks to Chandra Chari, Uma Iyengar and Adnan Farooqui for guiding me through the entire process. I end with an excerpt* by Hindi poet Udayan Vajpeyi—

'We are living in a time when poets are forced to speak all the time on their own poetry. I am grateful to Mr. Michel Deguy** who has given a poet the chance to speak not on his own poetry but on the time of poetry itself. Not on the art of his disappearance but the art of disappearance itself.'

Semeen Ali

* He was invited to Paris to deliver a talk on poetry in the National Library of France.

** Michel Deguy is a French poet and thinker.