

Dr Dalip Kehtarpal Reviews Vihang A. Naik's *Making A Poem*

Vihang A. Naik from Gujarat is one of the renowned contemporary poets. His poems have been widely published, have earned laurels and won numerous accolades and awards from various prestigious literary organizations. Some of his popular poetry collections like *City Times and Other Poems (1993)*, *Making A Poem (2004)* and *Poetry Manifesto (New and Selected Poems) (2010)* have won wide critical acclaim. Blessed with a deep sense of humanity and compassion he dedicated his Gujarati poetry collection entitled *Jeevangeet (2001)* to the wretched victims of Gujarat Earthquake that took a heavy toll on 26th January 2001. So, even as a great humanist the poet excels many great philanthropists in displaying his humanism.

Planked with poet and poetry, the slim anthology, 'Making a Poem' entails short, crisp, philosophical, metaphysical and psychological poems. Written in a very



simple language, the poems are lucid, racy and charged with deep meaning. Though the thoughts and ideas are condensed, they become intelligible, but only after deep concentration and brainstorming exercise. The unique anthology is also kaleidoscopic in nature. Many vital aspects of life are compressed into it with a lot of wit, wisdom and intelligence that also seem to have gone into the making of it. With a rarefied sense of creation, the poet has written something that is inconceivable in today's literary scenario. Rarefying the whole picture of the anthology, I would rather like to deem it as a quasi-crystalline intellectual creation. For proper comprehension, it is essential to analyze and explicate all the main poems of the anthology.

Naik's perception of man and woman vis-à-vis poetry is subtle and telling. In the opening poem, 'Women and Man' (p. 13) the 'poet rhymes the women/and the man' in an exquisite manner. 'A Readers Response' (p. 14) is highly symbolic, mythical and sensuous: 'You create a body/out of words'. 'May even want to see/a poem nude and/ frustrate yourself'. 'The endless sari of Draupati /disentangles. Unending/meanings seductively/reveal themselves'. 'A Poem and Questions' (p. 15) is a purely psychological poem. For Naik, as for Plato, poetry is removed from reality, based on imagination, but pass for truth: 'Words delivered/grow into a rumour/as truth/in a poem'. The tone of the poem at times becomes satirical, 'A slut searching/the father of her children/No offence. I mean/one cannot trace the roots'. This indirectly relates to

the poet's feeling and perception of 'searching the lost face /WANTED/by the reader' (Wanted p. 45). 'Why the population/of deceitful genes;/surrogate zygotes/in a poem'/are waiting to be delivered?' 'A Disturbed Sleep' (p. 16) is a purely psychological poem totally based on the workings of sub-consciousness mind: 'You wake up/startled/as in a battlefield/fighting/the airy nothing.'

'Are You Looking For That Poet' (p. 17) is another exquisite psychological poem. According to the poet, no true poet will divulge his true sub-conscious mind which could be full of nonsense. He also says that the poet's mind is fathomless and mysterious as the mermaid: 'In this age, dear Reader/do not look for a poet/who would tell you/the secrets of mermaid', by implication the secrets of his own (poet's) mind. 'A Play' (p. 22) is a poem which seems to be inspired by Shakespearean breadth and mellowness of vision. Anyone could play any part in any way in the world, it doesn't make any difference: 'You may muse/and play your part/whatever it be'. 'Poet, philosopher/or a fool. Doesn't make/much difference.'

'A Story' (p. 23) again, is shot through and through with the principles of psychology. The poet makes a psychological statement when he says that words can't express everything. Similarly, words fail to express the essence of a portrait of someone and no amount of details can help one in expressing one's feelings: 'A story always slips/out of your/hand. And opaque zone/of language. Words elude/your portrait. Details/wouldn't come for

rescue'. 'A Poem Profiles' (p. 24) is highly philosophical and is loaded with intense meaning. The poet affirms that poetry stands nowhere before the timelessness of time, though it's ideas are universal: 'Vagueness/of a poem profiles/A blank stare/against the page/of time. You think/about nothing'. 'A Matter Of Life' (p. 29) is based on the workings of the sub-conscious mind. It is also highly philosophical in nature. Life for the poet is a philosophy. The poet becomes psychological when he perceives how a poet thinks of one idea and drops it 'at the end': 'Life is a philosophy/book with pencil marks,/wounds and comments. A poem/you canceled at the end'. At the psychological level, this poem has an underlying unity with 'The Absent Poem' (p. 48) that explicates that an idea that occurs naturally in the mind of the poet disappears when he does not jot it down immediately: '...the poem/takes a leave/before/you even/pen a line'.

'Questions' (p. 32) is a very witty and pithy poem. An infinitely vast idea has been conveyed by a few poetic lines. According to the poet, question marks are always safe because one can question anything, but answers generally are unsafe and invite further questions or criticism. This idea has been metaphorically expressed: 'Questions. Questions' marks/remain safe./A dog's tail/that seldom gets straight,/at the slightest philosophic/smell...' The poet further adds how one exercises one's mind for finding a solution to a problem or solving a question: 'You whip questions to solutions/tame furious marks. A tilted tail/that settles down to

become/familiar. It is a domestic gesture'. "Making A Poem' (P. 33) is metaphysical, expressive, deep, symbolic and highly meaningful. Mark the expressiveness and meaningfulness of the following lines: '...Words bare/themselves. You come to know/what nakedness is a does'. Again, 'Menaka's charm works as a/Rule. A saga needs senses.' And the concluding lines metaphorically, wittily and metaphysically delineates the process of how a poem is made: '...the pen runs/out of ink. Refill. The sound/of music resonates. Sheets flap./The dance of the black ink and/little light. A poem is made'. Gloom on rare occasions seems to overtake the poet: '...this is how/poet breathes last./Now that the words/have come to an end./You search your poem/in the silence of death'. 'The Pen' (p. 37). Another latent process of making a poem is highlighted in 'A poem' (p. 39) wherein the poet explains his psychological perception: 'You discharge feelings,/your loose emotions/and flush them to make/clear a poem of words,/words and words'. This idea is finally fortified by the poem, 'A Poem Comes Alive' (p.41): 'a poem that 'injects life/in the rib of words'.

To be able to perceive beauty even in a minor mundane activity needs a very powerful imagination and when this beauty is metaphorically portrayed it assumes a celestial beauty. In 'Aquarium' (p. 38) 'a silky oily fish' swimming in the aquarium is exquisitely compared to the 'beauty/breathing/in the desert of waters/and bubbles.' A sharp sense of pain experienced by a poet is discernible in 'Winter Pen' (p. 40) when the poet's inner state of mind

blends with the bleak external milieu: '...Blunt/uncertainties scribble the city. You hear/the rattle of pain/through your pen in turmoil'.

With a strange sense of wonder, 'Making Of A Poet' (p. 46) expresses the poet's unfulfilled longings and cravings that reflect his own subconscious desires. Heart of hearts and on the wings of poesy, the poet desires 'to fly with birds', 'walk down the streets...as a stranger', 'to be alone amid the crowd', 'howl with wolves or talk to walls', but finally begins to wonder 'how poetry/makes a poet'. The poet wonders, but knows full well that it is his own poetry emanated from his powerful imagination that has made him a poet. The last poem, 'A Poet' (p. 49) clearly establishes how great a poet Naik is. The poet with his insightfulness, mighty imagination and subtle perception perceived the limitations of art vis-à-vis fathomless life which is the greatest conundrum. He affirms that a poet can't capture the beauty of nature or any natural object precisely and completely. Even after drawing a picture of a beautiful butterfly, the artist finds a blotted image as a poet finds after writing a poem: '...a butterfly/ends up with a pen/a blotted/ image/a poem.

The awesome anthology strewed with novel ideas, tenets of psychology, cardinal elements of philosophy, metaphysical touches, metaphors, universal elements, wit and wisdom has not only dominated and influenced the current literary scenario, by also taken the whole literary world by storm. Keeping in view its various merits, this

anthology will surely go deep down in the annals of literary history for posterity to reap its rewards and fruits.

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About the Author

Vihang Ashokbhai Naik is a contemporary poet writing in English, widely published and won awards. His English language poems have appeared in literary journals such as Indian Literature: A Sahitya Akademi Bi-Monthly Journal, Kavya Bharati, POESIS: A Journal of Poetry Circle, Mumbai, The Journal of The Poetry Society (India), The Journal of Indian Writing In English, The Journal of Literature and Aesthetics, The Brown Critique, The Poetry Chain among other significant journals. He is educated from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda with English Literature, Philosophy and Indian Literature in English Translations.

His collections of poems include *City Times and Other Poems* (1993), *Making A Poem* (2004) and *Poetry Manifesto* (New & Selected Poems) (2010). His Gujarati collection of poems titled *Jeevangeet* (2001) is dedicated to the cause of victims of Gujarat Earthquake, 26th January, 2001.

About the Reviewer

Dr Dalip Khetarpal worked as a Lecturer in English at Manchanda Delhi Public College, Delhi. He worked in various capacities, as Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and HOD (English) in various academic institutes in Haryana.



He was a Dy. Registrar and Joint Director at the Directorate of Technical Education, Haryana, Chandigarh. Dr. Dalip has also started a new genre in the field of poetry, which he would like to call 'psycho-psychic flints'.

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