

Study of Human Emotions and Psychology of Modern Man in Bijender Singh's *Late Night Poetry*

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Abstract

Writing great poems are not just a play of heavy diction and weaving lyrics out of ideas turned complex. If it is not understood by anyone who properly reads it, it may sound great only to the ignorant. Even William Wordsworth in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* says feels the same way when he suggests poetry to be closest to common life. For Wordsworth, poetry should be “a man speaking to men...” (Wordsworth's Theory, 42). The North Indian poet under study, Bijender Singh, shares some of these features. His book *Late Night Poetry* has not just the language but also the themes very relatable to common life and people. The present study shall observe the style, language, presented philosophy and contemporary social issues that are laid bare in his poetry book.

Keywords- *Contemporary Literature, Affection, Alienation, Humanism, Creativity, Indianness*

Introduction

Bijender Singh is one of the most active, prolific and enthusiastic poets of the contemporary India. He writes poems with purpose. There are several collections of poems composed and published by him. *Late Night Poetry or Only for those who have Heart* – the purpose and flavour of his book of verses is made clear right in the title. These poems are the outpourings of Bijender Singh's late night ruminations and he uses Louisa May Alcott's lines to lay the foundation of his poetry: "I slept and dreamed / That Life was beauty. I woke and found / That life was duty". His verses promise to nourish lives that otherwise come with challenges and tough situations calling for some "decisive push" and spiritual relief. The poems give answers to many emotional struggles we undergo. Some of the poems like *Who're You, Words in the World, In Pursuit of Good Heart, Urge to Splurge, What's Life* etc. suggest what strategies to adopt and how to retain our calm in those trying times for "Life is what gives you test." Bijender Singh presently works as an English lecturer and lives at Rohtak, Haryana. He writes in English, Hindi and Haryanavi.

Mr. More D. A. in his essay on Matthew Arnold says that poetry offers society with (arguably) the most strong criticism. 'Thought and feeling' are the sources where from a poet draws energy to meditate and pour onto the pages of literature. Further, Matthew Arnold calls poetry as 'criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty' (223). The anthology consists of fifty poems and most of Dr. Singh's poetry reminds us of the things we overlook in our everyday life. He says "We don't value / The one, we get easily / A drop of water seems nectar / For a thirsty" (*Demand is Demanded*) and reminds us that we must value everything and everyone we have at present before it gets too late. This poetic journey begins with *Follow Me Always*. It is a simple spiritual song that counsels us not to "eat our heart out" and recalms our senses in certain situations that we can even "take the hell to a heavenly abode". In *What's Life?* he says that this life proffers "sweet-bitter sensation" and compares it to a "risky ship" that warrants no safe deboard. In this ship, "sorrows and afflictions are the storms" and it is only our fighter spirit that keeps us going. In addition, if we observe a forearmed manner in our language, it may "in the world bring revolution" and Singh says "you'll kick away the hurdles" in life. He talks about these mantras in *Words in the World* and *Your First Step* respectively.

Singh dedicates this poetry book to his wife, Sharmila, and their "sweet" daughter, Saumya. Poems such as *When She Accepted My Love Proposal* are autobiographical and they sing the journey of Singh's ride from his proposal to Sharmila's acceptance and it comes with emotions galore. He calls this "adventurous act(s)" the "drama of my love". Other of his love poems include – *My Missed Miss*, where he compares the "pretty face" of his late beloved to a "rising moon"; *Lambency of My Love* in which he calls his heart truly rich and *Long Lost Love* where he calls his beloved a juicy

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mulberry tree. *Long Lost Love* is a beautiful elegy where the parted lovers do not abscond but choose to “shed tears”. They keep their love a secret- “Nobody knew our love secrecy” and upon realising their fate, “Agreed to part but not abscond”. In *Love vs. Lust*, as the title suggests, the two sides of human love are shown. Dr. Singh expresses another kind of love in *Body in City, Heart in Village* where he clearly agrees that “Though I’m a civilian now/ But I can never forget the days Spent in my village”. He grows nostalgic for the fun and simplicity the village life showered. Singh remembers how they collected “cast sloughs of snakes, picklock-plumes, Green vegetables from my fields” and the humble temple services his mother used to offer and his father’s rustic discipline that added health to the family. He remembers how everybody lived together in a joint family and there was affection galore. His life, which he calls a “withering plant”, was always bountiful with “Elders’ blessings, friends’ well-wishes”. Apart from the love of people, Singh misses the “Uncommisable air, unpolluted, neat and clean” that nestled the greenery. He shall never be able to forget his past that was rich and abundant in soul and “That why though my body is in the city/ But heart always in the village.”

What is sweet about these poems is that they reiterate spiritual tenets those have been emphasized by gurus since long. Poems like *Follow Me Always* (“Life is tasty know its taste. Chew it slowly not in haste you’re”) *Your First Step* (You take a chance, maybe one day, your achievement), *Hope Beyond Hope* (But shouldn’t hop beyond limitation, Lest one day lose our own recognition), *Demand is Demanded* (Feel the voidance When one is away), *Errors and Omissions are Accepted* (Misconception is the root cause of all breaks-up/ Cherish dreams before you wake-up.) – all suggest us to impart the basic life mantras to keep sadness and worry at bay. *Hope Beyond Hope* apprises the dangers of hoping the unachievable and suggests us to be “sagacious and shrewd” to be able to “To ward off darkness”. It reiterates Kabir’s belief “utne paon pasariye, jitni chadar hoye”. Singh calls this rule the “fuel” of our life with which “We may tomorrow change our fate”. *Life is Like a Train* talks about another tenet of spirituality- to enjoy life in every single passing moment and not simply exist. He compares life to a train and important events of our life to various stations it stops to during the journey from its origin to its destination: “Times changes, station may change/ But the name is same/ Since immortal it was stoned”.

As far as the language of the poems is concerned, readers sometimes feel an over exerted diction, enforced rhyme scheme and an elaborate word choice in passages those could have otherwise enjoyed simplicity. I would mention *Tomorrow* and *My Scriptorium* in this respect. The meaning gets lost in these purple words. In the poem *Why not Patience on the Road?*, lines like “Life is precious, at home many wait/ If your loss, how is their fate?/ On the road don’t measure car size. Think about loss, won’t win any prize”, forceful imposition of rhyming of “fate” and “wait”, and “size” and

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“prize” have rendered poetic harm to the verse. Similarly, in *Serial Killers*, the line “Sexually abused what to girls but boys” succumbs to ambiguity. In *The Unsaturated Passion*, “And a woman more fatal/ On call if haven’t gone” fails to draw an easy sense if one does not dive deep in the meaning of these lines that he is talking about a concubine who denies to return from her paramour’s home.

Most of the poems are thematically rich but some verses may be challenged on stereotypical and sexist grounds. Poems like *Words in the World*, *Death*, *Somniloquy*, make use of certain lesser palatable clauses like “slim, gorgy girl hot than fire”, “what’s your idea about money...direct honey”, “men drive crazy...direct hips.” (*World in the World*); “I earn and she spends”, “her uninterrupted tape”, “She is life, not wife, Never Tawaiif” (*When I Make Love*), “Salary is spent in make-up only/ After that they feel lonely” (*Why the Girls in Each Ad*). In the last mentioned poem, his belief that dressed up women attract her own predators can be socially provocative- “If one invites to kill who defend”.

The Veteran Tyrants is an interesting poem about an impoverished family of seven- five “nameless tissues” who are not even five and their skin tone, Singh says, is darker than the burnt frying pan. The poem discusses the plight of such people and shows us up to what extent they can go to feed themselves. Similarly, *What Makes Me Wake* narrates the issue of people who “run after money” only to earn some bread for their families. This basic human need of food makes people even risk their lives and makes them fearless of being “Unsafe, alone, sometimes even butchered”. And this money is otherwise “slippery” and doesn’t “stay in safe” with people. Bijender Singh also feels that money has made families grow apart and distant: “If money were not bondage here, Everyone would have been our dear.” Money takes away a son from his mother who waits for her all night long but the son fights at the border risking his life, only to make money and feed his family well. For Singh, “Money is cold; money is cruel/ For it ever makes up mule.”

In his poem *Old Thinking, New World* too, he shares the idea of how the modern world is rendering us a spiritlessly society that is “remote and alone Studded totally”. Here he says how joint families have been taken over by nuclear families. Life has become more “mechanical” and office has become the new home. While in *Double Faces* he detests people “Who wears double faces” and make prey their subordinates using attractions, in *Words on Garments* he cautions us about slogan-shirts and how they shape our personality. He gives examples where men (unwittingly) wear shirts reading slogans like “I’m a playboy, ladies beware”, “I’m M.B.A. do you know what? Master of Bad Activities”, “Give me big alms/ Because I an M.B.A./ Member of Bhikhari Association”, “Worries Invited for Ever” and “Wonderful Instrument for Enjoyment” (as acronyms for ‘wife’) and many more. *Errors and Omissions are Accepted* reminds us of those times when our argument turns into a fight only because we lack tact and politeness in our speech. He warns us and suggests not choosing

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inapt tongue. Reena Batra in her article “The Benefits of Being Polite” says that whatever we talk about other people “usually comes negative” and so we must be beware about our choice of words. People are just bothered about influencing lives and getting influenced, not about the art of communication.

In other set of poems, Dr. Singh talks about general issues we all face in our lives. He says that worry is like a cancer and thinking about the problems is like counting hair. He cautions us about the life spent in “(life liquidates in) carrying orders” and shows his distress in case of an infidel wife in the poem *When One Reaches Home Whacked*. He expresses a pang when “somebody very dear ignores” and says that such a heart won’t find a comfort anywhere. Later in the poem we discover that this infidel spouse could be anyone you share your life with. They could be your children in your autumn or your dear ones in your depression who fail/avoid “To read between the lines of one’s heart”. The last poem in the anthology, *Boss and You*, advises us to follow the rules yet keep whole our integrity, self respect and growth. It reminds us that our bosses are “Overflowing with luxury/ But hungry more”. In these state of affairs, we have to learn, grow and hone our resources- mental and financial, both.

While poems like *Your First Step* and *Demand is Demanded*, pushes you to keep going and value all what we have; in some poems like *Lonely Mind*, *My Scriptorium*, *Tomorrow*, *Long Lost Love*, and *My Drooling Nature*; the poet can be felt vaunting when he says “My mind- don’t you mind- is mastermind.”, “I so imaginative So keen to stimuli”, “If you’ve taken all my tries. Then forever you’ll miss me tomorrow”, “I’m exceedingly ‘high strung’” and “Everybody likes me for my drooling nature/ I exhilarate the disappointed...animate the picture/And gravitate the grief stricken-people” respectively. Some poems lands the readers in dubiety, like, in *Examination and Exanimation* and *When One Waits* there is some equivocality when Singh says “Examination may be waited but not exanimation. After examination one makes career/ But after examination A new peep-o-day of life/ Forever” and “No portage for the pondering far and wide/ Bride from groom and groom bride” respectively. These poems particularly leave the readers confused. Ambiguity can be seen in *My Missed Miss* too, when Singh says “Seek her soon/ Before this afternoon./ Night just approaching/ And mine is honeymoon” – his idea of honeymoon suggests happiness about his beloved who is much away from her. In this poem, the poet is in the look out of his dream girl whom he has met only in his dreams. He is very eager to trace her out with the help of other people and consummate his love. Similarly, the words “high or small” and the interrogation sign in “I rubricate this poem to all/ Who are my fans high or small?” (*My Drooling Nature*) suggests the extent of love for his poetry by his fans. In *Don’t Blame*, the word “homologate” seems a misfit substitution for ‘approve’. Singh has deliberately used the subtle nuances of meaning change in synonyms at many places in this book. At

many a times, the smooth flow of the songs are obstructed by the unreasonable use of purple language. The abovementioned poem is also an example in this respect. Word choice like “locution”, “oppugns with complaisance”, “encomium”, “Miff in the mien”, “osculation and pulchritude” etc. becomes much difficult for the novice of English poetry.

In Dr. Singh’s late night ruminations, there comes another set of poems that are a clear warning to the modern world. One of such poems is *Why not Patience on the Road?* where Singh says that vehicles on the roads are always dancing in the “mouth of death.” People may spend hours fighting on roads over insignificant issues and petty accidents which could have been avoided if they were patient in the first place. People drive heedlessly and don’t care about their lives: “The entire time wheels in hurry/ About the life don’t worry”. Another poem speaks of serial killing. This poem, called *Serial Killers*, narrates the heartless killings of pedophiles and such monsters whose “Lips never opened for prayers”. Children are in a vulnerable age and “Don’t know about foes and dears” and Singh warns them about the danger of “eating the bread” that these criminals offer as baits. One of the longest poems of the collection, it becomes a satire on the judicial system of our country that takes years to provide justice to victims and their families and also how insulting the inquiry gets. The only advice one can get is to be alert.

Further, poems like *Male-Female Issues*, *Double Faces*, *Political Threat*, raise the social issues of male female inequality, harassment and workplace politics etc. *Political Threat* questions the nature, degree and actuality of freedom and political will. He urges us to “ponder over the dark side” and awakens us to the fact that how the affluent are these powerful people “Master of their will” and how they get away with “Abduction, rape, corruption or murder.” Dr. Singh raises the issue of women objectification in *Why the Girls in Each Ad*. He observes and questions the need of women in all advertisements, even in redundant ones which show pictures of attractive women: “People love not ads, only pictures Aping western culture, forgotten scriptures”. Singh finds it against the Indian culture. In the line “In each organization you will find beauty” he says that women are needed to beautify the office too.

Singh’s poetry overall has almost all the seasonings that reflect Indian modern culture and presents a very fair picture. In *Stray Reflection*, Iqbal says, “it is illogical to find logic in poetry, for it uses imagination to present reality.” Literature and other areas of human studies cannot be appreciated solely on logical and reasonable grounds for the base is human mind that is beyond reason. So a mathematical scrutiny is unwarranted. On the whole, Bijender Singh’s poetry makes a decent read for over-the-cup conversations and reflections.

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