

Paeans of Patliputra

by C. L. Khatri

Patna looks circular
from the *Golghar*
though it is rectangular.

My eyes travel east to west
it looks moon-shaped
though it is spoon-shaped
a bowl of foul water in the middle.

Buddha's prediction
'beware of fire and flood'
fire failed, flood tamed
the last we saw in 1975.

The Ganga crawls on her knees in north

sinking in the sand

mixing memory and desire.

City afraid of the rivers-

Ganga, (east-north) Punpun,(south) and Sone (west)

rivers afraid of the city--

fornicated dream of *Ganga Pariyajana*.

Banse Ghat-moksha giving Ganga-

witnessed the last journey of the millions,

cremated the Ganga, its creator.

Electric cremation home

spirals of smoke and kilns

breeding a Marine Drive and a Juhu beach.

From the top of the *Golghar*

I look at Bankipore Girls' High school

once soaring in the sky of education

now groveling in the bottom--

khichari, uniform, cycle, books

money disbursement center of excellence.

My eyes turn to *Gandhi Sangrahalay*

a monument of pride and mourning

hungry books, thirsty spirit

Gandhism and moth.

It takes me to *Gandhi maidan*

every speck of dust--

a page of living history of the country

from fall to spring

from peanut sellers to slogan sellers.

A Gandhi statue brighter and taller than ever

a crow defecates on his head.

I revolve like a minute hand
of a clock on the clock shaped top
tiptoed and contract my eyes
to look for the relics of the grandeur
of Magadh Empire towards Kumhrar.

Like a crane I quest for
a Charak in PMCH
a Chanakya in the university.
a Chandragupta in Vidhan Sabha
a Bhagirath in the Ganga.

I desperately look for
'Patal' of Patligram,
'Kusum' of Kushumpur
in the jaundiced jungle of concrete
a horde of love birds pecking in the eyes of sun
writing a new discipline of development and decay.

I take a handful of grain
from Mir Kashim's granary
to preserve in my poetry
the mysterious symmetry
of dance, death and desire.

Bio:

C. L. Khatri, a reputed perceptive critic and editor of *Cyber Literature* and several anthologies of criticism, is an emerging voice in Indian English poetry. He is a bilingual poet writing in English and Hindi. His two poetry collections in English are *Kargil* (2000) and *Ripples in the Lake* (2006). He edited an anthology of poems on world peace *Millennium Mood* in 2001. He was awarded Michael Madhusudan Acadmy Award for his poetry collection *Kargil* in 2002. His poems are widely published, anthologized and translated in different languages in India and abroad.

As a prolific writer he has produced more than three dozen papers and twenty books of criticism. His books include *Vivekananda: Speeches and Writings: A Critical Study*, Prestige Books, New Delhi, *Water de la Mare: Poetry and Novels: An Evaluation*, *Indian Literature in English: Sense and Sensibility*, *World Literature: Critical Responses* and *Indian Drama in English, Narrative Noodles: Essays on Indian Novels in English* published from Book Enclave, Jaipur, *British Authors and Texts* and *R. K. Narayan : Reflections and Revaluation* from Sarup & Sons, Dariyaganj, New Delhi, *Vivekananda : Voices & Visions*, Authorspress, New Delhi, *Mohan Rakesh's Halfway House : A Critique*, *Vijay Tendulkar's Silence! The Court is in Session: A Critique*, *Grish Karnad : Naga Mandala* from Prakash Book Depot, Bareilly.

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