

THE POETRY OF C.L. KHATRI: A CRITIQUE

By Sudhir k. Arora

In a churchyard
releases anonymous poems
fiction blows the candle. (*Two-Minute Silence* 71)

This is what C.L. Khatri reveals the truth about the fate of poetry in the present scenario which is dominated by fiction. Undoubtedly, fiction has dominated the scene and brought poetry from the centre to the periphery. The dominance of fiction over poetry is responsible to its deplorable state to some extent but the way poetry is being written is equally responsible. Innumerable poets, rather poetasters have appeared like weeds in the field of Indian Poetry in English. While deploring the present miserable state of poetry, Jayanta Mahapatra states:

In India, in the post-Independence era, innumerable collections of poetry written in English have appeared from various publishing houses. The point is: It is an odd situation, because more bad poetry is being published now than ever before in Indian history. And whereas our fiction has made a decisive impact on literary writing around the world, nothing very significant has been seen in the output of Indian poetry written in English. (*Door of Paper* 127)

Notwithstanding this miserable state of poetry, many poets continue to light the candle with the hope that one day the world will understand the values of their poems which are the rich storehouse of knowledge and wisdom. C.L. Khatri is courageous enough to light the poetic candle at the altar of Muse in spite of the blowing of the fictional winds.

(II)

C.L. Khatri has registered his presence in the field of Indian Poetry in English with his poetry collections, namely, *Kargil*, *Ripples in the Lake*, *Two-Minute Silence* and *For You to Decide*. Poetry is his weapon for fighting against poverty, violence, illiteracy and deterioration of values. He recommends: "Let us cultivate poetry in ourselves. It is also a kind of fight against the dehumanising forces. It humanises, spiritualises and sensitises a soul" (*Ripples in the Lake: An Epistle*). He endeavours to evoke the very essence of India—the peaceful and spiritual India. He

makes the people conscious of the British hangover and recommends the very ingredients of Indian culture. He believes that Indian poetry should be Indian—Indian in theme and Indian in idiom. Regional poetry should shake hands with the poetry in general and bring out the very culture and ethos of the country.

Khatri makes the people aware of the British hangover. He also talks of another kind of gap which has entered the mind of the people who live in the castle that has made them ego-centric with a feeling of insensitivity. He creates ripples even in the hearts of such insensitive people. He invites them to come to his hut. Even the hut has a heart to feel and so is better than that of the castle where the insensitive people reside. For the poet, his hut is the “temple / Better than your metallic castle” because “It has a heart that weep and smiles” (*Ripples in the Lake*, 64).

The diseased contemporary scene is the consequence of the imitation of the West. The East imitates the Western utilitarianism. Materialism has polluted the mind of the people for whom raping, murders, kidnapping, smuggling, drug trafficking, match fixing, photographs of matinee doll—nude and cute, new culture of valentine, dating, rock-n-roll etc., are the things that occur daily and so have become ritual-like. Everything has become a commodity in the era of commercialisation under the impact of the Western materialism. The poet feels sad when he sees the people following the Western culture while neglecting their own Indian culture. They have imbued the alien culture while becoming alien to Indian culture. He calls such people *manasputra* as they are languishing in cultural amnesia.

Those who ruled our body now rule our mind
We behave like their *manasputra*
Languishing in cultural amnesia
Imbibing life a parrot alien definition
Of time, space, culture, civilization, religion
And become alien to what is ours (*Ripples in the Lake* 63)

When Khatri sees such miserable state, he finds himself at the crossroads and does not know where to go. He feels himself miserable as he is neither rooted nor uprooted. The Western outlook

has drawn a line so deep that people have created differences among themselves. These differences have divided India into many Indias. The poet cries over this state thus:

I am at the crossroads
neither rooted
nor uprooted –
coin a term between
native and diaspora
At autumn of my village
hanging between nostalgia
and freezing warmth
I see vertical iron bars
between India and India (*Two-Minute Silence* 54)

(III)

The poet loves India—the united India with her spiritual fragrance. India lives in villages which cannot be ignored. Culture is still alive in villages in spite of the changes. As there is unity in diversity in India, the poet feels that it is the time when regional cultures which give the message of love and compassion should be promoted. Small things can offer the great messages. Festivals play a great role in uniting the people with the thread of love. Cultural harmony is possible. Hence, the poet creates ripples of love and harmony in the hearts through his poems. Festivals erase the line of differences and make the people one and united. The people while celebrating are lost in the cultural world and forget egos and differences. The colours of Holi colour them in the colours of love and fellow feelings. Mark the two excerpts which illustrate the poet's endeavour to evoke regional culture for creating harmonious relationship, based on love, feelings and mutual understanding.

Holi hai bhai Holi hai!
Don't take it amiss; it's Holi!
Seven colours of water
Seven colours of powder
Seven colours of abuses in songs.
Flying slowly, slowly *Navaras ki ey Holi!*

In-house Holi, out-house Holi !

In love, war and Holi nothing is unholy.

Holi hai bhai Holi hai

Don't take it amiss; it's Holi ! (*Two-Minute Silence* 49-50)

...

Dance Jogi ji dance,

Holi ka hai trance.2

Jogi ra sa ra ra ra.....2

Jogi ji wah jogi ji

Take away your laws, Jogi ji

And let me to go to my in laws, Jogi ji.

That is my Braj; Gopian bear me grudge

Their dresses are dry; their cheeks shy

Their eyes sit restless on the door

They have gone crazy about Krishna.

Let me fly Jogi ji, let me fly.

Jogira sa ra ra2 (*Two-Minute Silence* 52)

(IV)

The poet in Khatri sees the deterioration of moral values in all walks of life. People have forgotten their responsibilities because of their materialistic way of life which has made them ego-centric to the extent that they never think of the society. The feeling empathy is missing. The poet cries over the decline of values in the poem "Two-Minute Silence" thus:

Sisters and brothers of India

Let's observe two-minute silence

On the uprooted microphone

On the broken chair in the parliament

On the torn pages of the constitution.

Mothers and Fathers of India

Let's observe two-minute silence

On your death, on the death

Of your fear and deference
To your vows and values.
Ladies and gentlemen of India
Let's observe two-minute silence
On the death of *dhoti* and *pugadi*
Oxen and coolies replaced by wheels
Chopped up hands and lame legs.
Friends, stand with me
To observe two-minute silence
On this great grand culture
On this glorious century
On its great promises.
Let's observe two-minute silence
On the shrinking space, shrinking sun
Stinking water of the sacred rivers
Sleeping birds, falling leaves
Watermelon being sliced for quarreling cousins.
Someone whispered in my ear
Can't we do with one minute...? (*Two-Minute Silence* 65-66)

The poem "Two-Minute Silence" in *Two-Minute Silence* is a criticism against the materialistic attitude of the people who have become bankrupt as they have lost their spiritual values. The poet exhorts the people of India to muse over what good values and cultural traditions they have lost. No doubt the era of globalisation has given the way to speedy progress—but progress at what cost? Indians have embraced the Western ways while losing the best of their culture.

The poem 'Two-Minute Silence' offers Khatri's vision of India where people will be of values and follow what is best in Indian culture. He sees a vision of India—an India where people are patriots with the feeling of respect to the parliament and constitution, where people respect their elders and follow values and vows in spirit, where there is harmony among people without the clashes of generation gaps, where people do physical labour and remain healthy, where people do

not pollute the environment, where people once again become the singing birds that sing folk songs, where people maintain unity and integrity among themselves and where people do not disconnect themselves with their cultural roots and where people follow the best things not in words only but in spirit. No doubt the poem reveals the postmodern traits of man who enjoys meaninglessness of life and does not know why he lives. He enjoys the absurdities and feels much pleasure in the fragmentations of life. For a postmodern man cultural values and vows are fit for dustbin. He has lost the meaning in life. This poem hits the consciousness of the people and awakens them morally and spiritually so that once again they may regain and retrieve what they have lost. Positively it will give the people an opportunity to retrieve the best so that they may associate with their cultural roots for getting true happiness that lies within.

(V)

While creating ripples of cultural ethos, the poet sometimes gives some philosophical reflections which become the steps of art of living. He never lets the reader feel boring and in between he offers some striking lines which become the touchstone for a happy and peaceful life. Life is full of struggle. The struggle begins the moment a man comes in this world. Life is a river which he has to cross and while swimming he has to face many adverse circumstances. No one is swimmer in the beginning. Even without being a swimmer, a man has to enter the river of life which makes him learn through its flow with the passage of time. The man moves so is the river. The river flows and flows and finally reaches the final goal of meeting the ocean. This happens with the man who comes and finally goes to his real home. The real home where he will go after salvation is not easily accessible. He crosses many ends but finds that the ends become weary ways. He earns name and fame during this flow and finally realises the truth of the line "*Ram nam satya hai.*" The river becomes the metaphor of life. The poet states:

though I am not a swimmer

I can do it even by flapping my hands and feet.

Heaven lies ahead

infinite peace, infinite bliss

sound sleep, selfless work

and salvation at the end.

I kept on swimming

kept on moving
the river also kept on moving.
I crossed so many ends
but the ends turned into weary ways. (*Two-Minute Silence* 13)

The poet mentions the difficulties and hurdles that come on the way to the final goal in the form of sand, soil and wastes which are meant to stop him from flowing. These hurdles are to be crossed with determination and strong will power. During this flow, man begins to develop ego—the ego that makes him believe all in all. But the moment he reaches towards the end, his ego disappears and he has to realise the truth while surrendering to the Great Power.

With sand, soil and wastes
water grew thick like mud
a rhinoceros lazily lying
peeped at me through the skin of the mud
and said, “*Ram nam satya hai.*” (*Two-Minute Silence* 14)

Man feels powerful and capable of doing anything in his youth. He thinks himself that he is the doer. He never realises the truth that he is not the doer. It is only towards his old age that he realises the truth that he is not the doer but only a pawn in the hands of Great Master. How beautifully Khatri presents this deep truth in such simple words through the metaphor of pawn:

At dusk wisdom dawns
King or Queen—all are pawns
in the masters’ epiphany.
Work or wait for a new dawn. (*For You to Decide* 54)

The poet knows the value of dreams and hopes which give him a meaning to live life hopefully and enthusiastically. If dreams and hopes are wiped out from a man’s life, he will be no better than a dead body. Dreams and hopes that make him alive are the chains that connect generation to generation.

Dreams and hopes form an unbroken chain
mysteriously connecting generations
from Adam to your grandson. (*For You to Decide* 71)

The poet is so sensitive that he finds some meanings of life even in the world of Nature. He learns from Nature the art of life. He sees the waves and finds that they rise and fall but they never cry. A man when he rises feels happy but when he falls he cries and blames others. The poet asks the man to learn the art of living not from any guru or anybody but from the waves which offer a philosophy too deep to describe.

Flowers bloom and blush
Waves rise and fall but not wail
The art of living. (*For You to Decide* 77)

No doubt, man is in the forest—the forest which is full of darkness and here he has to find out the way without any grudge. The poet asks him to dance and feel happy like a peacock. He will certainly find his way out of the forest only when he listens to his conscience.

listen to the song of your soul
dance like a peacock in the forest of life
Poetry wants to stand with you. (*For You to Decide* 47)

(VI)

The poet in Khatri is also quite sensitive towards women. He inspires them to spread the fragrance of culture. He also asks them to fight against any kind of exploitation and oppression. He believes that Indian marriage is not a contract but a sacred union or bond of two souls. It is the Indian belief that the daughter's palanquin goes out of her father's house and the pyre comes out of her in-law's house.

Papa babbles "hold beti, hold
Go..., go.. forget your papa, mama...,
But hold it rightly – a daughter's Palanquin

Goes out of a father's house

It's only her pyre that

Comes out of her in-law's house (*Ripples in the Lake 24*)

Father makes her understand and gives some suggestions which will be helpful to her in her married life. He asks her to serve her husband, father-in-law, mother-in-law and asks her to forget his papa's side.

Your husband is your lord

Father-in-law is your father

Mother-in-law is your mother

Serve them, obey them, win their hearts

Forget us all and become theirs (*Ripples in the Lake 24*)

The daughter becomes so emotional that she does not speak. Tears that fall on his feet are the words. The poet touches the string of the innermost part of her soul when he says: "Her tears on his feet give him the words" (*Ripples in the Lake 24*).

The poet is thoroughly Indian as he respects woman as woman. Indians believe in the saying: "Where women are worshipped, gods reside there." The poet is shocked when he sees that the modern Kauravas are not only satisfied with the *cheer haran* but they are parading her naked. The poet asks the mythical Draupadi to come down from heaven to redeem the dignity of her sisters.

Come down from heaven, Draupadi

Regain your dignity, awake the Pandavas

Re-enact your historical swear

Redeem the dignity of your sisters (*Kargil 24*)

(VII)

The poet believes in the religion of humanity. He respects all religions. The *Vedas*, the *Bible* and the *Koran* are read with devotion. If he talks of gods and goddesses like Kali, Narasimha, Krishna, Sudarshan, Indra, Shanker and his marriage and Lingam, he also talks of Husain, Madeena, Karbala, Mohammad and Christ. For him religion does not create difference. It removes ignorance and brings light. It becomes a journey of a human being to Being—the Ultimate Goal of life. He believes that this journey is possible through love, good acts, and true knowledge and even through the practice of Raja yoga. Its journey leads a man within—the journey that makes him experience the truth of life and enlightens him while removing the darkness. How meaningfully the poet defines religion!

Religion—

an act of peeling off onion skins of ignorance

a journey from being to Being

through love, action, knowledge or Raja yoga

or whatever leads you to You in you. (*For You to Decide* 42)

The poet is against commercialisation of religion. His poem “Brandawan” reveals the materialistic attitude of the priests who have turned religion into a trade. The priest plays with the religious sentiments of the Indians who have blind faith in the sanctity of religion. The poet satirises this exploitation of sentiments of the people and the encroachment of trade on the sanctity of religion.

And the priest was taming us

With “*Brindawan Bihari Lal Ki Jai*”

And the receipt book of Rs. 101, Rs. 501, Rs. 1001

The guide showed both butter and *chakra*

I was mistaken

I thought it was a temple

It was just a Chandanichowk (*Ripples in the Lake* 12)

Man is an enemy to himself. He has become *bhashmasur* who intends to end himself. His condition is not better than that of a robot. It is his egoism and materialism that have turned his boon into bane. The poet is hopeless and so waits for a Vishnu to come on this earth to make man free from the clutches of a Bhashmasur.

The devotee turns devil

boon becomes bane—

a threat to the Lord.

The brain powered robot

in the avatar of a Bhashmasur.

Humans wait for a Vishnu. (*For You to Decide* 52)

The world has become 'e' world. This 'e' has entered everywhere. Religion is also not its exception. The poet opens his tab and finds 'e' in the mouth of Krishna who shows all letters in it. He prostrates before this e-god and begins to 'e' chant. Nothing remains untouched with this powerful 'e'. Here are the lines which clearly reflect the poet's attitude towards this 'e' which remains invisible but no one can deny its presence. Here are some lines which make the reader laugh as well as serious enough to reflect over the omnipotent power of this 'e' god.

om 'e' invocation, meditation, salutation

om e-gurudev namah!

om e-birth namah!

om e-class namah!

om e—text namah!

om e-marriage namah!

om e-honeymoon namah!

om e-shopping namah!

om e-sex namah!

om e-healthcare namah!

om e-governance namah!

om e-banking namah!

om e-Swiss, e-Panama namah!

om e-crime namah!
om e-cremation namah!
om e swahaaaaaa...!
om e all pervasive power namo namah!
hail 'e' invisible, omniscient, omnipotent power!
my tail started wagging
my mouth shouting like muezzin
eAllah eAkbar Rahmani Rahim...(For You to Decide 70)

The poet finds that birds are the ideal messengers of love. Man should learn from them the message of secularism. The birds are secular as they do not know the difference of religion. If they sit on church or mosque, they enjoy feast in temple. The poet praises the birds for their secular feelings.

Birds are Secular
Each day perch on church, mosque...
Feast and nest in temple. (For You to Decide 79)

(VIII)

The poet wishes to become the messenger of Indian culture that is rooted in the love and peace. He believes in cosmopolitanism and so never likes the lines which divide man from man. It is the magic of love that possesses the power to wash such shadowy separating lines. The message he wishes to offer is the message of love and fellow-feelings. He longs for resurgence of peace and flowing of the stream of love thus:

Let an endless stream of love
Runs through the universe
Wash away the shadow lines
That separate cause from effect. (Kargil 9)

The poet searches for the song of silence amidst cosmic cacophony. As he wants to sow the seeds of self-esteem, he seduces the celestial stream and sunlight to be helpful in sprouting them.

The seeds are not the seeds but his students whom he will graduate in grammar of God with a gardener's care. He is sure that his students will follow the spiritual path while spreading the feelings of love and fellow-feelings.

I'll graduate them in grammar of God
with love and care of a gardener
watch them grow into garden of gods
before I am buried into its breast (*Kargil* 13)

To fight against the Kargil within, the poet boosts up the hearts of the Indians and asks them to be Jawans of Kargil. The poet's optimistic Indian attitude is conspicuous here.

Let's be Jawans of Kargil
Arise, Awake, Ascend
And fight to the end. (*Kargils, Kargil* 22))

The poet also talks of the universal love that believes not in the part but in the whole. Like Buddha, he identifies himself with the humble creatures of the world. Cosmic love is the strength of Buddha and for this he does not hesitate to renounce her. He knows that even in this renunciation he loves his wife though this love is not physical but certainly cosmic. As he embraces the universe, he embraces his wife cosmically.

Lord Buddha renounced his bride
Yet embraced her
By embracing the universe (*Kargil* 27)

The poet wishes to give the message of true love, which is spiritual in nature, not the swell of a seasonal river or the surging motion of a perennial river. This love is "the depth of the ocean / the peace of Buddha" (*Kargil* 27).

(IX)

Some of C.L. Khatri's poems remind us of Nissim Ezekiel, particularly his Indian Poems. The Indianization of words and idiom give a new flavour to the reader who enjoys the *khichari* language most. Khatri's Professor shakes hands with the Professor of Nissim Ezekiel. The difference is that Ezekiel's Professor is retired while Khatri's Professor still works. Ezekiel's Professor introduces himself first, then puts questions before his old students and delivers a lecture as a part of his nature. Here is an excerpt which gives a peep into the very nature of Ezekiel's Professor:

Remember me? I am Professor Sheth.

Once I taught you geography. Now

I am retired, though my health is good. My wife died some years back.

...

How many issues you have? Three?

That is good. These are days of family planning.

I am not against. We have to change with times.

Whole world is changing. In India also

We are keeping up. Our progress is progressing.

Old values are going, new values are coming.

Everything is happening with leaps and bounds. (*Collected Poems 239*)

Khatri's Professor becomes Professor Saheb. His Professor anticipates Ezekiel's Professor who believes that the new values are replacing the old ones. Khatri introduces Mr. Yadav, the guardian of the student. This guardian comes to meet the Professor Saheb with the hope that he will help in the examination. This is not the end. He gives the roll number and asks him to do strong pairvi in the evaluation of the answer books. Khatri makes the reader conscious of the decline of the values even in the education system. Ezekiel's Professor is extrovert as he himself shares with the students while Khatri's Professor is introvert as he is compelled to ponder over his role. He peeps into him and asks himself who he is whether a conniver or a Professor. Mark the lines to feel the various dimensions of the relationship of student, guardian and Professor

'Good Morning, Professor Saheb' wished Mr. Yadav

He is your son, pointing to his son

'touch Sir's feet'

'Bless him, Sir'

An examinee at your college, Sir'. (*Ripples in the Lake* 15)

...

Here is your cousin's Roll NO.

Do strong pairvi in his M.A.'s Answer-books (*Ripples in the Lake* 15)

...

Who am I? a Conniver or a Professor?

Who is my audience? Vacant hall and dust coated benches

(*Ripples in the Lake* 15)

"Professor Saheb" is a satire on today's students whose main aim is everything except study.

(X)

C.L. Khatri has penned a few haiku though he is not a haiku poet in strict sense. He simply draws the reader's attention through his 3 lines short pieces. He does not care for the syllables necessary for a traditional haiku but he gives priority to the substance. Mark the following haiku which reveals the scenario of migration, gaps and diaspora, resulting from education:

Education means
migration from the village
gaps and Diaspora. (*Two-Minute Silence* 81)

Education makes a man refined and cultured. It is expected that a man after getting education will contribute his mite in the development of the place where he resides. But, the new trend is that he leaves the village as soon as he gets education. He migrates from the village to the cities and maintains a gap with the people of the village. The tendency to leave the nation for having future in the foreign land for the material gain is prevalent these days. The result is diaspora. This diaspora is within the people who have isolated themselves on the criteria of education. Education becomes not for enlightenment but for creating gaps and diaspora.

A baby when born is soft, innocent and pure. As he grows, he comes in touch with the world and becomes worldly. He comes as a lamb in the world but the world makes him wolf. He gets education but does not use it for his enlightenment. He misuses it for his selfish end. Education differs from scholar to scholar. Education turns his insight within and reveals the evil within so that he may light the candle of knowledge and remove the darkness. A man learns first for gains and when he realises his real purpose of life, he unlearns what he has learnt. He begins to re-educate his self and lights the candle within and moulds his self on his journey from wolf to lamb once again. Here is a beautiful haiku which reveals this idea through the image of wolf and lamb:

Scholar to Scholar
journey from wolf to lamb
re-education self. (*Two-Minute Silence 74*)

The poet in Khatri talks of cosmopolitanism. The whole world is his abode. All the people of the world are the members of his family. He recommends the concept of oneness in all. He dreams of creating a house where all the people of the world may live and for this he seeks housing loan. How beautifully the haiku reveals the poet's ideal for one home for all without discrimination of caste, colour or creed!

Greenland to New Zealand
the whole world is my abode
seeking housing loan. (*Two-Minute Silence 74*)

C.L. Khatri is flexible in form and content of his haiku. He does not follow the set parameter of seventeen syllables in three lines with a season word and caesura. Through his haiku, he strikes the intellect, appeals the heart and creates the picturesque world where the reader wonders at the ideas, presented in the reel of images. The three-line pieces just open the vista of mind that expands itself while associating with the experiences of the poet. He reveals practical dimensions, bitter truth, contemporary colours, philosophical reflections, romantic fervours, political corners and natural environment through his 'Haiku' which offer matters to weigh, to consider, and to reflect.

(XI)

The poet in Khatri possesses the aesthetic sense. The poem “Khujraho” reveals his aesthetic dimensions. He chisels the sculpture of Khujraho with his pen and carves images. Here is the poem “Khujraho” which reveals the script of aesthetics.

In Khujraho
Stones
speaking
smiling
kissing
each other
embracing his beloved
making love with her
dancing in ecstasy
climaxing together
writing a new discipline. (*Kargil 14*)

His poem ‘Khujraho’ stands in direct contrast with the poem of the senior poets—Shiv K. Kumar and I. K. Sharma of the same title. Here is an excerpt from I.K. Sharma’s Khujraho:

Here are no sermons in stone.
The figures act: mate and mate and mate
in eighty-four ways and will do so
beyond 1984.
All commandments die here.

Love is their Bible
and they zigzag in it without flagging .
The whole air tingles with the aroma of their bodies.
The lusty hands run toward the clusters of flesh
and they dip into each other to reach their Jerusalem... (*The Native Embers 32*)

Here is an excerpt from Shiv K. Kumar's "Khujraho":

Since any distance
between leaf and bud, bone and flesh
hand and breast, only whets appetite
these stones brook no restraint .
They flow into a confluence of navels,
Legs and thighs, leaving blemishes
Even on a lotus palm. (*Woolgathering* 24)

Shiv K. Kumar's and I.K. Sharma's 'Khujraho' differ from C.L. Khatri in conception and execution. Shiv K. Kumar's 'Khujraho' is the quintessence of creation. I. K. Sharma is a poet-sculpture who has not only carved the figures with his pen but made them speak for themselves also.

In Shiv K. Kumar's 'Khujraho', love never accepts distance which sharpens hunger of creative sex. Stones at Khajuraho cannot tolerate any control; they remain free and, so, seem to be engaged in love-making. He creates erotic flashes through the stones which flow in order to make a complete union of navels, legs and thighs. It does not matter if there remain blemishes which make merits invaluable.

I. K. Sharma becomes one with the carved figures and is lost in the excitement and the aesthetic pleasure. What Sharma wishes to convey is that sex is the creative force, not merely lust. It is love that makes union pure and eternal. Like the carved figures, the poet also achieves the higher summits while moving from physics of sex to metaphysics of love.

C. L. Khatri personifies Khujraho in order to create a new discipline of love. Here stones are not stones but human beings who speak and in response smile. They kiss and embrace while making love. They seem to offer the message of love which is the only way that will lead to bliss. Love without lust is the love which is needed in human beings. They will continue to love while the love with lust results in failure. Love comes to the level of eternity in Khujraho. The poet has

beautifully written the whole script of love in a few lines. Here lies the victory of Khatri as a poet of aesthetic value.

(XII)

The poetry of C.L. Khatri makes the reader realise the very essence of India and her culture. The particular regional culture is turned into the national culture. The poet cries when he sees the decline of values as a result of globalisation. His aim is to awake the people and make them conscious towards the Indian culture. His poems are laid in India where the cultural soil of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati is spreading fragrance everywhere, where the Himalayas are crowning her head, where small local rivers like Falgu, Vyas, Punpun, Kosi and Sone are quenching the thirst of the fields, where trees like *mahua*, palm, *saal*, *sisham*, oak and teak are giving their shade, where saints like Buddha dwell in the hearts of the people, where leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Amedkar are respected and followed and where birds, insects and animals like crane, sparrow, parrots, parrots, peacock, crocodile, elephant, dogs, horses, squirrel, cows, toads, buffalos, small fish like tengara, cheena, garai and fat fish like mangur, bowari, rehu, ketla are leading their free and wild lives. Nature adorns the poetic world of Khatri with *sawan*, breathes through the paddy fields and sugarcane fields, touches potato seed, plants, cabbage, lime, and guavas and brings the music of humming bees. He uses the names from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Vedas* and Indian scriptures and Indian history. Draupadi, Aswatmedha, Devaki, Kurukshetra, Chanakya, *Kalyuga*, *gandeev*, *Dashanan*, *manasputra*, *Nagraj*, *Brindawan* etc., are the words that exhibit his keen interest in Indian history, culture and religious books. He does not use the translated words but uses the Indian words. *Chopal*, *kirtanmandali*, *grihlakshmi*, *veer jawans*, *pitiririn*, *gangajal*, *mukhagni*, *chhutaka*, *mahabrahamins*, *brahmbhoj*, *pindadan*, *puri*, *kheer*, *yajna*, *ma*, *pattal*, *rayata*, *budiya*, *chakra*, *khadi*, *chadar*, *pairvi*, *karamayoga*, *karamyuddha*, *borsi*, *lathi*, *amaavasya*, *kajal*, *poonam*, *tabij*, *teeka*, *kahua*, *pichas*, *churail*, *bindiya*, *payal*, *gajara*, *hawalas*, *ghotalaas*, *Jogiji*, *bhanga*, *thandai*, *jeeja*, *dever*, *malpua*, *gulal*, *dhoti*, *pugadi*, *Rasleela*, *Gopian*, etc., are the Indian words that he has added to his English vocabulary.

Khatri is adept in using technical aspects to suit his themes. The fusion of idea and feeling is natural in his poems. He sketches the cultural map of India with words. He sings the song of human values which make him a poet of humanity on a large scale. He hits the insensitivity of the people through the use of irony and satire. For instance,

Can't we do with one minute...? (*Two-Minute Silence* 5)

...

In fools' world who cares for verse?

A fool fussed: "why don't you write for fools?" (*For You to Decide Muse* 33)

Sometimes, his symbols, like "Watermelon being sliced for quarrelling cousins" (*Two-Minute Silence*) surprise the reader. He introduces folk songs which make his poetry musical. Here are the two samples of his folk songs in English which offer the original feel, a difficult task for a poet to do.

Dance Jogi ji dance,

Holi ka hai trance.2

Jogi ra sa ra ra ra.....2

Jogi ji wah jogi ji (*Two-Minute Silence* 52)

...

Flying slowly, slowly *Navaras ki ey Holi!*

In-house Holi, out-house Holi !

In love, war and Holi nothing is unholy.

Holi hai bhai Holi hai

Don't take it amiss; it's Holi ! (*Two-Minute Silence* 49-50)

The poet employs the technique of questioning which strikes the reader who becomes alert to satisfy the queries though somewhere he finds the clues or options or even the direct answer in the poem. Mark the questioning, the answer of which is offered in the figure simile that makes the reader ponder over life:

How was the rayta? It struck me like a thunderbolt

It was sour as the dead's life (*Ripples in the Lake* 6)

Here is an instance in which the poet puts questions and replies in options in the form of questions:

Who am I? a Conniver or a Professor?

Who is my audience? (*Ripples in the Lake* 15)

Here the poet asks questions and replies himself without putting the reader in suspense.

Who cares for the butchered buds, laid out leaves?

All they care is fruit, its fragrance and justice. (*For You to Decide* 73)

The poet is fond of using figures but he never uses them unnecessarily. Here are some instances to prove his skill in using figures.

Alliteration

minting mystical maze (*For You to Decide* 33)

...

Compose, clap, critique: all in one (*For You to Decide* 33)

...

seeking secret to success (*For You to Decide* 48)

...

peasant preaching precious pages of life (*For You to Decide* 72)

Personification

Time fled. I don't know where and why. (*For You to Decide* 56)

...

hope doesn't die; it transmigrates (*For You to Decide* 66)

Simile

I see the whole age rewinding

like a movie on a frail screen (*For You to Decide* 71)

...

I dream to bloom in the air

like a lotus in the cesspool. (*For You to Decide* 23)

The poet also uses imagery which creates a picture in the mind of the reader who cannot help without appreciating it. For instance,

With pitcher on the side
women walking back home
a slow rhythmic dance (*Two-Minute Silence* 36)

(XIII)

The poet in Khatri worries over the British hangover along with the decline in moral values as a result of the progressive globalisation in the name of modernisation. This modern culture has made man a machine. The poet writes to turn this machine into a man—man with feelings like love and compassion. He diagnoses the disease and calls it reversal syndrome. His poems suggest the ways how to face this reversal syndrome and restore the original form with cultural values. He favours peace but he knows that it is “neither sold in market / nor invented in the lab but rest in breast” (*Kargil* 16). He is shocked when he sees that “Monkeys are marketing world peace / mounting it on the warhead of missiles” (*Kargil* 16). His poems evoke the Indian ethos and sensibility while recommending the essence of Indian culture. He ignites the feelings of love for the country and awakes the conscience towards the rich Indian heritage. He reveals Indianness in English words and when he does not find the proper English word, he uses the Indian word as it is.

With his four poetry collections—*Kargil*, *Ripples in the Lake*, *Two-Minute Silence* and *For You to Decide*, the poet Khatri has emerged as a significant poet by virtue of his Indian themes, inbuilt irony, sparkling wit, and fusion of idea with feelings. He makes his words colourful but the colours with which he paints the landscape of his poetry are Indian. He continues to move towards the destination that he will achieve with the passage of time by virtue of the water of his poetry which will flow to find its place in the ocean of Indian Poetry in English. No doubt he is on the edge, but with the flow of his poetry he will come to the centre. He has the potential of being a prominent poet. He is a magician who uses the magical poetic brush to paint the landscape of his poetry with Indian colours.

With a stroke of brush
He makes the world colorful

What a magician! (*For You to Decide* 80)

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Bio

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