

SCHOLARLY ARTICLE

A viewpoint on Poets and Poetry in Difficult Times

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Abstract

A poet acts, reacts and interacts at different times with various kinds of people and gathers multiple experiences and challenges, and tries to give them suitable chronological order but stays obscure. He is caught up in inquisitive analysis into the realities as frenzied current life makes it difficult to find rationality many a time and so an inquiring mind ponders over seriously. One cannot forget the past even if one tries, for it is from the ancient times, one gets some glimpses of roots and origin that make one think deep and long, which is a good beginning for some imaginative outpouring with love and compassion. In a way, one pursues legacy and lives with it, otherwise, it drives one to scepticism and disorientation where purification causes a big threat.

A stage in life comes, when one attempts to know the secret of life and existence amidst ghost of death that works under the diktat of Time spirit as one feels at the burial grounds when he watches burning bodies...! It is also a moment of introspection and painful inspiration when one encounters the inevitability of death and if he sings its glory lyrically, it speaks of strength.

Poet ought to know the puzzling dilemma of modern times and accept the challenge of terrifying possibilities where cerebral exercise turns ineffectual, snobby and dicey that love to create its own area of elimination with an ill-fated outcome. To look back is good for here one

understands situations and people and as positivity fills one enjoys living in the mystery of birth and death, a cycle man struggles hard to know.

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1. Current Age Keeps a Creative Artist under Tension

Many a time, a poet, a creative artist experiences incredible stress of age. However, it stirs imagination and strength of mind to see realities, which make life difficult and at the same time, throw challenges. Encounters with persons of a wide range of experience and knowledge, build up feelings of resolve to read the human mind and heart. Even a chance meeting, creates a plethora of impressions with crowds of feelings and thoughts. I fail to offer logic in a normal sequential course of fallout but it often happens with a sensitive intellect, who wishes to participate in the affairs of the world.

An intellectual inquiry into the actualities of life reveals a deadly conundrum where a man tries to put aside emotional areas so that he puts up a gutsy face and understands judiciously existence and identity in complex times. Questions of survival at the worldly level and happening beyond arising but do not find apt answers. Who, why and how of life appear to disturb but he ignores them. An assortment of thoughts and feelings gather, an ordinary man realizes but avoids in-depth scrutiny and so his outlook regarding life never gains intensity or depth of understanding. Wherever, a crisis of feelings, the perplexity of ideas and thoughts about the man and the world exist in inquiring intellect, it is a cautious journey into the regions of man's natural ability to react and speak about what he feels and if it continues, he begins to reflect seriously.

To seek possible help, he goes back to see what he gets from his heritage, the wealth of experience and wisdom of his ancestors, the ancients. It happens with an ordinary man engaged in routine acts of making survival easy and if he reflects on life a little more, he thinks of wealth he cares little but owns as a right. Ancestral wealth is something on which he survives from day one and ironically, he is rarely beholden to his ancestors.

Intellect and heart work and try unconsciously to find rationale of background in which man lives in totality where men, matter, nature, experiences, impressions, little jealousies and bitterness, postulations, future and destiny pull together such various fragments and segments of life and experiences, and thereafter, in solitary moments, a few perceptive brains begin to analyze.

2. Going back to Past and Recollecting Little Memories at Different Stages of Life Has Authentic Significance

From here, a man goes to past, I think now. Earlier, perhaps I hardly thought seriously, for that was not the age, I console. However, now I think of scattered books and some scrawls on loose papers including notebooks, which teachers told or taught to take notice, for these keep knowledge integral to some extent even if one is unconcerned about what the ancient or modern critical theories propound.

On inquiry, one finds every vigilant and astute intellect is a critic and an artist as well. It was and is a mass of treasures of wisdom and knowledge in literature parents, grandparents, and their parents and so on...had kept secure for future.

It was a dead wealth –land, house, books and...memories left around but never visible even as I thought they lived somewhere inside and inspired me to continue the journey. It is not new but it provokes to think. After all, a man wishes to live when he fully knows that nothing survives. Why it is? This thought process stirs a few and a man feels there is something eternal, lasting and indestructible what the dead left for the future and there, he thinks of the huge wealth they left turns into motivation and inspiration for the generation living now and those who will live in future.

If the old offer adequate stuff to think over what is futile, a mere waste or short-lived, then explicitly, it is it is possible to presume. If one understands it an exactly eternal flow of thoughts and feelings, it appears a contradictory thought also but it is not a faulty route of valuation during deliberations. It is something timeless and ageless. A spring from where one gets inspiration and so life moves on and on and therefore at this stage, questions of birth and death arise. Even while you ponder over the futility of wisdom that fails to know what is beyond, it is from here that creative artists, saints, religious men and intellectuals begin the arduous and endless task of never-ending inquiry into the mystery of life.

As a man grows up he leans back on what ancestors left, and thought, draws inspiration and continues to live life while the artist also wakes up to say what it wants in a more stylistic, distinguished and classy manner of expression. If he, you or I write, it is an expression of what they bequeathed. Therefore, I simply think I am continuing the tradition good or bad and so you, everyone else and I will hand over the legacy to the future. A creative artist continues to revive what he gives with a faint freshness, and usually speaks of something innovative, which is not always true and at times, it is blatant discomfiture.

3. Frame of mind when a poet wants to know the enigma of life and existence

It was a different frame of mind when I wrote verses that investigated deep into the mystery of life, existence and its objective on earth. The questions were not new but ancient. Perhaps everyone was worried about, since the times of primeval man, who possibly had initially, no knowledge of source of inner pain or physical wounds and if he had it was inexplicable and from that age, he travelled a long distance in time and space.

Questions troubled as I wrote, and death or the dead often caused genuine anxieties. I understood the meaning as everybody knows its philosophic and ordinary meaning but really fails to explain. The mysterious theme often occupies the man when in thoughtful moments and so ideas of life and death crawl and generate bruises in regions of emotions and thoughts. However, birth is not of consequence. Death is. I did not wish to die. Does anyone want? I just think of past and speak truth perhaps, for there is hardly any substitute.

Near the middle age in many instances, a man realizes that death is the only foreseeable truth. One purposely avoids discomfoting thoughts I feel. On the death of someone in the village, I vividly recall, I visited the cremation ground and carried wood, some dry, a bundle of green tree's twigs instantly felled. The dead was consigned to flames and then, the collection of ashes, going to Hardwar and those unpleasant rather awful rituals and unwilling acts of charity and gifts to pandas of hungry eyes. However, that was their livelihood so...why to incur displeasure. I know dead lives inside everyone and a man, at times, realizes that the dead is still alive. Existence of the dead inspires to live and live. What a charade! At melancholic moments, it teases and pricks and then, one feels to write a requiem –a soft funeral song. The experience of this hymn or whispering is also an inspiring moment for a creative artist.

Mind it, uncertainty of death and faces of the dead act as basis of fears and thrills, and you think...and so, I write. It is this thought that gives birth to Half Men –the incomplete men. It is an allegorical figure one creates when perfection appears impossible. It is not a question of any critical knack or theory. It is a fact and basis of what you write at time. A creative artist cannot exist in isolation and art does not take birth in a void. No doubt, nature is always dear to many men whether susceptible or insensate. It is good to escape from the teasing thoughts of worldly worries but then how long. A creative write must talk with whatever medium he chooses – prose, poetry or intervallic unfolding or story or simple text of a few lines, plain and yet thoughtful and therefore, if he talks lyrically, it is an art and so he is proud of it.

4. Ignorance as a blessing and the how intellectual power turns exclusive

Knowledge as ignorance is bliss, a challenge and a dangerous weapon also that kills I realize. It is time of crisis in perilous and complex times and an opportunity to seize and act wisely. Intellectuality is vile, wicked and ostentatious if it indulges in the pastime of purging, a kind of exclusion and therefore, the consequences could be unfortunate.

It is the message of contemporary times I could make out, when I go through again lyrics of many poets and shuffle pages of poetry books at leisure and think of age and obscurity. One is hesitant to accept if poetry provides pleasure in hard times. Lyrical delight is transient, is the truth but to assure 'the self' it is good to repeat poetic lines frequently as it underlines warmth of heart and intellect. Like any other considerate and nervous man, I may appear livid and hurt but I am interested to discard and destroy the debris of iniquity and indiscretion that make life wretched and forlorn. To what extent I am a winner, is the question, for care and compassion is necessary in life during wicked times.

It is an effort to align with everyone as thoughts of sharing grief and agony of times with the other in analogous situation, offers relief with whatever hope and happiness in store, a man keeps. I hold I am always a protagonist of life of joy and a staunch believer in continuing the fight against evil forces that try to injure social body. There is nothing new in what I say and I guess it is with others to whom I am talking to...a very selfish thought I nurse but I cannot stay away from the callous and sadistic manifestation

Maybe, one reads people and times with exclusive personal viewpoints, for one notices conflicts and variations in the conduct of men around, who speak of life of hope in plenty. One may say he wants to convey meaning of trust and expectancy even while a man might not change habits. However, when habits become mere rituals, it is a sign of lethal languor and boredom. It often happens with some anonymous belief and therefore, variation is possible, and no doubt, finality suffers. In the same way, meanings presuppose a different profile.

A creative artist is very active at times, thinks of life from various perspectives, and then abruptly, he is silent. It does not mean that passivity or lassitude takes over afterward, or it is a kind of dreariness or lack of interest in man and humanity. Ego and self-centeredness one feels overwhelm a man I know. It is a great flaw but one cannot hide. One goes back and realizes that understanding minds of people and the conditions of life in which they live all over the world have an affirmative aura of mystery, and requires a man to inquire deep into and comprehend the cycle and rotation of enigmatic life.

5. At times, for a man principles scarcely matter and this truth is harsh but strangely enough, it also functions as inspiration

The truth is one speaks about others at times distrustfully and there a cruel thought determines and one appears honest and genuine when one is selfish, and one cannot deny this state of mind. Mind it a man does not consider principles matter in life and the thought provokes. Is it one wonders?

This difficulty is deadly and in the art of poetry, it is an inspiration. A strange suggestion I consider. It is possible it is restricted to me only! Truth is bitter, all say and one should accept. Even godly men tell lies...and if one resists the temptation to tell lies, it is great. A creative artist ought to know. It is disastrous I think when alone. However, a lover of art ought to learn to live with required and redundant possibilities. It is not always truth. Amidst truth, reality, mendacity, and trumped-up episodic inspiration for a work of art live and thrive.

If it is peace, violence also makes life miserable. If man speaks of growth, he also owns up imperfections in attitude with overshadowing sense of sadism and cynicism. It is all in poetry...a work of art, a slice of literature.

It is time of conciliation and conflict, running parallel to attain goal of an ideal life amidst fears of ambiguities and prejudices a man scarcely appears to confess. How to define and give definition to this psychological state is a thorny question before an artist of words and so through verses a poet tries to construe what he understands. Even if a creative writer is a critic, at the time of creation of poem or story or novel or any piece of art, he is unconscious of the critic present inside. Absence of a critic in a creative mind is good for the any piece of literature.

As a critic, at times, gives immense joy and pain enjoyable during the period one is tempted to share experiences obliquely. I was witness to tremendous social, economic and political changes, and recognized paroxysm of intellectual curiosity and sense of inquisitiveness sans reaching potential finale in judging the outcome because of incongruities and absurdities men of the age carried notwithstanding plenty of radiance and light.

I wondered and asked 'the self' of its scope and dimensions. Is it an individual hang over to look philosophic I am bewildered and prompted to ask ingenious intellects. Is it possible to measure 'the self'? Not so easy but efforts to reach somewhere or nowhere, invariably exist, and from here, inquiry may begin, which one can share only through oblique literary endeavour or when he scribbles a few poetic lines at random.

6. Poetic incubation with deep reflection spurs ingenious process which is not a very convenient period in any art particularly poetry

I am still to find out. However, the period of incubation and intense deliberation while one goes through the process of creative work is wearing and harrowing. A man is alone and morose and seems to rotate single footed and only heaves deep sad sighs while he stretches arms as if in yogic posture to get relief but suffocation continues to enhance inner sufferings as he fails to understand what takes place outside and thus, passing through frustration, he visualizes strange and mysterious scenarios.

Experience of terrifying magnitude haunts during the period but an artist out to meet the creation so that before he finishes, he hits upon a logical fulcrum, again a futile attempt, as a poet, I realized.

Therefore, to find opportunity of steadiness and firmness in meanings that change each moment recedes further and this situation makes a creative artist alive and fit in spite of the uniformity in which he lives.

Aberrations no doubt he stumbles upon but a blueprint is discernible to an astute poetry lover in a particular verse when he looks into the word construction and its lyrical storyline or the text as rituals, which indirectly, give pleasure to the ears rightly or wrongly. It seems a puzzle many a time.

Creation of artwork is a serious act and to walk on a poetic track is a unique experience. One tries to weave story of a modern man within a story, and it does happen during the composition of long poems. It is unconscious formations of a long verse in the corners of heart and mind, and a poet doubts if it was also premeditated and conscious. In short, in verses of a few lines, one is comfortable. However, long verses need concentration on thought, emotions and the statement an artist wishes to make to avoid trap falls. At times, contradictions work toward pacification and fusion. In this mental state, construction is powerful, effective and genuine.

In each reflective and investigational quest, a creative mind visualizes a real man many times. Even when he is in a crowd or in a large hall, a predisposed mind hears many voices and giggles, whispers and ardent boos and sighs.

At another moment, hurling of abuses, mikes and chairs, caps and papers with purpose perhaps creates a scary and uncanny scenario, a modern propensity. Voices and words carry images of numerous walking silhouettes laughing and sardonic and thus, appear to provoke a creative mind, a poet, who is distraught at the contemporary socio-political scenario and therefore, he caricatures such anecdotes with irony and a little of anguish and anger. No

imaginative power can determine the depth and length of a verse. At times, a few lines predict the philosophic contour of a lifetime

A poet writes lyrics and it hardly matters whether it is long or short. It depends on thought he develops and yes, it looks odd and frightening but the truth is he takes up a theme even if it appears hazy and begins to grow with it until prospective clarity comes to the lines as he tunes up words. Again, intensity works hard to interweave rational body of a man in motion. It creates a man but it is not a full man. It is half, for it is incomplete and imperfect and so an artist fails.

Even god (if one accepts such an existence), who created man, was perhaps non-serious because on analysis it is difficult, for an inquiring intellect is prone to say that man –particularly a modern man, is an image of god. If he is, it is a huge travesty. However, a creative mind tries to sympathize with the man despite infirmities of body and intellect, who is a picture of wretchedness in reality of splendour and magnificence, as anguish and desolation overwhelm.

Now, what is this man? It baffles. One feels it inside and it is the inside of everyone. A great puzzle it is to locate its positioning though it registers its presence every moment whether pleasant or agonizing, and this begins distillation of emotions and thoughts and here, the artist wishes to arrest it in appropriate lyrical lexis.

A man, as a creator tries to identify it with a purpose even if indefinite. A creation, to the architect -the creator of piece of art looks larger than life and at that stage, it challenges the creator. It is a dilemma.

In a man, an incomplete man or say half man notwithstanding, flaws are not only shadows but also it seems, these enter the minds and hearts of people around and it makes one aware of the contamination. Creation is a cumulative outcome of what creator's intellectual energy does.

Doubts arise at times and one feels convinced that the creator fails. Not the creation it is, and this unforeseen realization disturbs.

7. Truth and goodness, ambitions and iniquity constitute man and society and these are parts of poetry while offering artistic joy

Man, an incomplete man or say half man is a bomb, a crust of love, compassion, empathy, hate and annihilation, and an embodiment of three basic qualities of *Sattva* (Truth, integrity etc.), *Rajas* (Passion, ambition, power etc.) and *Tamas* (Negative feelings, thoughts, wickedness etc) also. Many a time, a creative mind thinks but fails to locate its true status, for he is an image of god or a bundle of flesh and bones. Still he lives not only within but also breathes outside of each one and therefore, speculations linger on without reprieve.

A creative mind begins to realize that it is bad rather deadly. However, he withdraws for it is an implausible thought emerging out of fear psychosis or perspective or one may call it neurosis. Qualms and uncertainties put stress on the inner man the second voice of a man of flesh and bones. He is listening whether alone or in a crowd and so, it becomes a burden. Perhaps, he ignores it as in incurable consternation he thinks and trusts even while he lives in skepticism, the pitiable man –a fractured structure that moves, sitting inside everyone. That gives some stimulating driving force to poetic frenzy but it speaks of truth irrefutable.

Maybe, a man (?) feels, history is alive, culture breathes as the old pulsate. Man may look not happy when he finds people walking with gruff faces, where heads look like patches of darkness, for it is dormant yearning of man to perpetuate tyranny of lies, to live a life of men, not precisely men and therefore, many questions crop up. Here, one fumbles and falls but cannot correct deformities, for creation at times, turns out massive burden realities of life create, and none can find a getaway. Consequent nestling within is a luxuriant soil for lyrical passion.

Without knowing, we continue to find solid basis where life can hold a torch of eternal love, peace and harmony. Perhaps a man (an incomplete man?) a creation of god will keep flame of eternal love and compassion burning. It is wish of god. Does god exist? Doubts with flickers of faith, stir a lyrical heart and mind.

Going beyond the traditional constraints, many a time, brings not only cynicism but also confusion. Man pursues path of time-honoured ethical organism he creates. It can be a technique or could be straightforward and multipart.

Man moves about from the classy flavour and experience of the old and the ancient to the current times in a vastly changed attitude where he confronts internal and external anarchy and chaos without possible let off. In spite of the argument to the contrary, he evinces love for the old and dead secretly and that causes inconvenient situation as he finds poetic expression a bit effortless and still a challenge.

It is predicament of the author, a poet, who carries historic judiciousness within and later, links it to current times through poetic outpouring or write-ups.

Perhaps, a creative artist, a poet... wants rationalization for what he writes or wishes to know the correctness of what he states. In such an eventuality, it is reticence and lack of certainty that forces to find foothold and solid stand even in shaky appendix of identity.

A writer understands the utility of living in a group and away from it, and still he wants autonomy, wishes to preserve detachment from the crowd, and so looks out for intellectual resolution without annoying anyone.

A man in good faith reasons out existence and the idea of righteousness and thought of interests of people he often meets. Therefore, he treads path of truth and here, he confronts traditional but suppressed resistance from ‘the self’ and this quiet activity persuades to invent ‘another self’ and if the inclination spreads, it gives birth to men of a singular nature.

Distinction is subtle but it has sense of mesmerizing exploration when a man lives as half man or incomplete man and so the creation of split or half men is the consequence of flawed thought and concept but underlines the existence of imperfect man, probably a full man. One knows that the poet’s imagination is free from shackles, and the thought may be strange and eccentric, but imagination has its reasons.

Living of men as incomplete men raises questions of identity at that time. Retrieval of delusion and illusion for a poet is interesting and exciting but not very gratifying. A man in search of completeness and wholeness it appears, lives in dreams, phony notions of magnitude even as he creates a new world with heavens and gods for convenience of ‘the self’, for he becomes a central character and preceptor.

It looks strange. It is a land where imperfect men jump from the earth to the sky and create heavens for pleasure and it is an excursion without hang over of morality or principles, and so the real men are lost.

In modern times, a thought besieges that men, who talk and walk, suffer not from ‘the identity crisis but from the loss of it’ because individual zones of illusions overwhelm and defeat the principle of birth and eventually vanish into oblivion.

Not the perception or the exposition of impasse it is as men in search of complete distinctive entities take control of the mental landscape but it is intricacy of sustaining it for long ...because perceived deformation drives to an ultimate end.

Was it a creation out of mind's eye and vision for the pleasure and joy of creating men partially without ever envisaging disastrous formations, which only perpetuated sin and impiety but continued to live? Or was it a poetic creation to disturb ‘the self’ and find comforting asylum elsewhere, for it also offers lyrical joy when one thinks of the location of atypical creation in another man –not complete as yet but a bit mystifying proposition?

Questions arise, puzzle and confound but inquiry continues as one grows in a civilized world as a fractured man in the image of a full man...for it is an exploration of ‘the self’ through ‘the self’, and that is a challenge for a man to situate identity somewhere without noise. Does poetry help in arriving at a conceivable solution to these manifold quests, questions stay alive?

About the Author

An author of more than sixty books in English and Hindi, P C K Prem (p c katoch of Malkher Garh-Palampur, Himachal, a former academician, civil servant and Member, HP Public Service Commission, Shimla) a widely published author has eleven collections of poetry (and Collected Poems in four volumes), six novels and four collections of short fiction. He has six books on ancient literature and two on folklore. A few significant works on criticism are *Contemporary Indian English Poetry from Himachal* – edited 1992, *English Poetry in India: A Comprehensive Survey of Trends and Thought Patterns* 2011, *TEN Poetic Minds in Indian English Poetry* 2016 and *Time and Continuity* 2016. Creative writings in Hindi include twenty novels, nine books on short fiction, one collection of poetry and criticism.

He is also an author of *History of Contemporary Indian English Poetry – An Appraisal* 2019 in two volumes and *The Lord of Gods* 2019 also in two volumes, based on *Srimadbhagavata Mahapurana AND As I Know SHIVA PURANA* 2021

Editors – Rob Harle, Dr Sunil Sharma and Sangeeta Sharma, published through the Authors press, Delhi a critical book on the Poetry and Hindi Literature of P C K Prem – *PCK Prem: Echoing Time and Civilizations* 2016. The Authors press again published another critical book on novels – *The Spirit of Age, and Ideas in the Novels of PCK Prem* (Editor: Dr. P.V. Laxmiprasad). Dr Jogindra authored a book on the Hindi literature of P C K Prem – *PCK Prem Ka Kathasansar* (Nirmal Publications, Delhi 2005) with special reference to his *Kaalkhand*, a Hindi Novel in Five Volumes. Dr Hemraj Kaushik has edited a collection of select short stories. *P C K Prem Ki Chuni Hui Kahaniyan* recently through Pushpanjali, Delhi 53 in 2019.

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