Book Reviews

Vijay Kumar Roy, ed. *The Social, Cultural and Spiritual Dimensions of Modern Indian Poetry in English*. Newcastle, United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017. pp. 195. HB. Price £61.99. ISBN: 978-1-4438-7968-2.

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Indian Poetry in English is remarkably great. The conflict between tradition and modernity at various levels – social, cultural, familiar, national and cosmopolitan is well marked in the works of modern poets. It can be said about the modern Indian poetry in English that with every passing decade an increasing immediacy and heightened awareness of actual Indian experience is noticeable. Gradually with passing time the English language poetry became more Indianized in nature. It is discernible in works of modern Indian poets of English. The book under review is a collection of fourteen critical papers. It explores the works of modern Indian poets who are significant voices of our time. Aju Mukhopadhyay is a bilingual award winning poet, author and critic, writing on literature, environment, wildlife and more. In this book, Aju Mukhopadhyay in his paper, "Devotional Zeal in Modern Poetry", has discussed Indian tradition, culture and philosophy. He writes about some important devotional poets with their distinguished traits. He lays emphasis on the themes of spirituality and mystical experiences in the poetry of Dev Ganguly, Syed Ameeruddin, Rudra Narayan Mishra, N. Karthikeyan Osho, O. P. Arora and Anuradha Bhattacharya. He notices spiritual strain in the poetry of Rudra Narayan Mishra,

> When I utter Thy name, O Lord!
> When I hail to Thee,
> My filthy heart gets purified
> And seems to dance in glee. ("When I Hail to Thee", Flashes 1)

The poets writing in English from the Northeast share the romanticism and mytho-poetic vision of their vernacular counterparts both past and present. The common bond of poetic sensibility is predominated by love for the land, nature, myths, and tribal folklore. Professor Nigamananda Das has dwelt upon eco-cultural and spiritual aspects in the poetry of Mamang Dai, Yumlam Tana, Hem Barua, Maheswar Neog, Lakshahira Das, Dayananda Pathak, Umakanta Sarma, Bhupati Das, Rupanjali Baruah, Robin S. Ngangom, R. K. Madhubir, Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Rajendra Bhandari, Bhaskar Roy Barman, and also the English rendering of the poetry of Hiren Bhattacharya, Bhupen Hazarika, Nagen Saikia, Megan Kachari and Kathita Hatibaruah in his detailed analysis of the poetry of Northeastern India.

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There is no denying the fact that K. V. Raghupathi's poetry is rooted in the abundance of philosophy, nature, transcendentalism, imagery and social perspectives and is replete with similes, metaphors, personifications, apostrophe, irony, climax, anti-climax and full of rhetoric and symbols. There are two papers on the poetry of K. V. Raghupathi. V. Sunitha in her paper, "Precepts to People from the Peepal Tree: An Appraisal of K. V. Raghupathi's *Wisdom of the Peepal Tree*", explains the ideology that nature "uplifts human lives with its unarticulated but explicit philosophies" in a number of ways in order to spread good values from time to time. G. Srilatha's paper, "Reflections on K. V. Raghupati's *Voice of the Valley*" is about the philosophy of human life. Srilatha has noted down how *Voice of the Valley* is full of esoteric wisdom.

> The true artist is one who uplifts and elevates
> And ennobles himself to the higher levels of consciousness
> And effectively communicates his feelings to others.
> Such an artist has a grandiose vision
> Which he translates not in words but in actual living;
> He lives within (77)

Vijay Kumar Roy's paper, "The Fusion of Social and Spiritual Elements in the Poetry of R. K. Singh", is an attempt to analyze the poetry of R. K. Singh as social criticism and how it displays the power of plain words, speaking for love, sensuality and meaning of life.

It is worth mentioning that Pashupati Jha's poetry has been praised for its beauty, sincerity, brevity, intensity, wide thematic range and Indian ethos by many established national and international critics. In this book, the poetry of Pashupati Jha has been examined by two scholars. Kusum Kundu discusses religious, social, cultural and political aspects in the poetry of Pashupati Jha. On the other hand, Ram Kulesh Thakur depicts Jha's works as "a departure from the traditional notions of poetry" and as introducing new ideals and evolving new styles. For instance,

> Then you touched me with a smile—
> and, after a long, long while,
> there was an untimely rain,
> and I was all poetry again. ("Reviving Touch", *Cross and Creation* 14)

Dr. Shujaat Hussain is a celebrated poet and creative author of eminence. He is credited to be widely anthologized in Indian history of English poetry. V. Sunitha, in her paper, "Shujaat Hussain's Civic Concern: A Critical Appraisal of His Selected Poems", illustrates "the ubiquitous spiritual, cultural and political aspects" of Hussain's poetry.

There are two papers on the poetry of K. V. Dominic. The first has been written by D. C. Chambial. It is a thorough analysis of Dominic's poetry. Chambial points out how the poems of K.V. Dominic exhibit the poet's interpretation of life around. Another paper, "The Matrix of Cultural Coexistence in the Floral, Faunal and Human Worlds as Presented in K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason*" by Kavitha Gopalakrishnan, deals with "coexistence and cohesion" between human beings and flora and fauna. *Winged Reason* is a collection of poems of earthly imagination. Lofty thoughts and ideas are not areas

obviously it looks but deep down Dominic conveys anxieties of human life. His poetry is a document of social concerns in lyrics, beautiful and rhythmic.

Vijay Kumar Roy is a dynamic bilingual poet writing in English and Hindi. *Realm of Beauty and Truth* (2016) is his latest collection of poems. His poems have appeared in a number of anthologies, and national and international journals and magazines. His poems are more than testimony to his poetics; in lyrics of ringing clarity and precision, he conjures a will to survive, the buoyant motion towards love and nature which is sometimes all that saves us. His themes embody the symbols, not only of everyday life, but they pull us past the events, beyond the struggles. His poems explore the spaces of the past and the present, the personal and the political, the conscious and unconscious, the living and the dead, that resound across cultures and languages in sympathy or protest with each other.

There are two papers on the poetry of Vijay Kumar Roy. In the first paper, "Reconnecting with the Sublime: The Poetry of Vijay Kumar Roy", Robert Maddox-Harle examines the connection in Roy's poetry between nature and spirituality. His poetry is intimately concerned with the themes of humanitarianism and spirituality.

> That garden of bliss
> Has only flowers
> Of all hues and pleasant odours
> To welcome those
> Whose lives are lived
> Not for themselves
> But for those
> Whose arms do not work
> Legs do not walk. ("Eternal Game" 4–12)

The second paper on the poetry of Vijay Kumar Roy, "Spiritual Trends in the Poetry of Vijay Kumar Roy", by Bhaskar Roy Barman begins with a historical background of Indian poetry in English and examines the poetry of Roy in the light of divinizing nature, love, beauty, surrendering to the Almighty and the complexities of life. Barman examines how Roy's poems explore all aspects of human life.

Robert Maddox-Harle, in his paper, "The Poetry of Sunil Sharma: An Expression of Love and Liberal Humanism", examines true "liberal Humanism in the poetry of Sunil Sharma. It is important to note that Sunil Sharma is a prolific poet whose poetry has appeared in various national and international journals and magazines and anthologies.

In the last paper of this book, "Socio-political Issues in the Poetry of Meena Kandasamy", C. L. Shilaja reveals the issues of the dalit (oppressed) class in the poetry of Meena Kandasamy.

The poetry of modern period ranges from personal emotion and lyricism to complex linguistic experiments, dry intellectual tone, pungent satire and nursery rhyme. It has a new note and a new urgency of utterance but even then it is not possible to escape completely from tradition. This penetrates deeper and deeper into the poet's consciousness and influences their observations of the living present and past, thus it

runs into the present and shapes our future. Noted critic Dr. Rajnath asserts, "Good poetry always blends subjective and objective elements. Sometimes subjective elements become strong and sometimes objective elements become strong". *The Social, Cultural and Spiritual Dimensions of Modern Indian Poetry in English* edited by Vijay Kumar Roy justifies this statement. In the end, I would like to mention that this book covers the social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of modern Indian poetry along with some other relevant themes that can prove useful to readers.

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