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The Poetry of D.C. Chambial: A Flavour and a Fragrance

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ABSTRACT

D.C. Chambial – a lone, but powerful voice from Himachal Pradesh with typical hilly traits. The sacred land of his ancestors now and then defiled, tarnished and degraded by the horrendous cacophonies and mechanized smiles of hypocrite Messiahs further provide savour of the salt to his pungent irony, the poet further wishes to liberate the victims piously from the evil snare of Social malaise and putrefaction. This antidote is equal to the cherished idea of Emancipation. Eco-Consciousness is an innate sign of growing spirituality in Chambial. The simultaneous movement of his poetic vision from material to the metaphysical is further asseverated. This movement starts from the centre and moves forward to make a perfect round circle. This circular movement, thus, dexterously encompasses almost the whole of humanity. How the poet aspires to articulate a realm where nothing but perfection dwells.

INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY is dead. If not, it is in the I.C.U. The Chief Editor of Harper & Collins-India, declared it a few months ago. In support of him came another stalwart, the senior commissioning editor and manager of Penguin classics. According to him, POETRY is not a thriving business. Today's bards are neither seen nor sold. A budding poet and an employee with Oxford University Press, Farzana Quarter, talks factors those have compounded the tragedy of POETRY. As a matter of fact, there is certain sadness attached to the passing of things near and dear ones, pretty and beautiful. The end always

seems more poignant. Likewise, we are in final throes of an art that gave us GHALIB & GINSBERG, TAGORE and TENNYSON, NERUDA and NIRALA (*Times of India*). Is it a befitting elegy for verse? Actually not. It is a real survey to focus on the plight and predicament of those practicing or experimenting this genre.

In the light of the above, if we go through the views, reviews and comments of/on D.C. Chambial's Poetry, with particular reference to *Collected Poems* (2004) and *Hour Of Antipathy* (2014), we not only get ourselves acquainted with the leitmotif but also come to final consensus that he is the one and the only poet who has helped very competently the survival of Indian English Poetry against all odds and vulnerability, also has saved it outright from going to a wrack into the waters of deluge by his mundane, yet magical boat, *Poetcrit*, which he edits as a labour of love biannually to speak to Mankind and to serve his fellow beings. Along with Jayanta Mahapatra's subjectivity, O.P. Bhatnagar's irony, and Niranjana Mohanty's intellectual vigour, D. C. Chambial – a lone, but powerful voice from Himachal Pradesh with typical hilly traits – came onto my study table nearly two and a half decade ago with new flavor and fragrance. I was then trying to toddle in the arena of contemporary Indian English poetry and found Chambial one among the best fellow poets leading the decade. In this study, I am making an effort to highlight only some salient features of his poetry.

The foremost but the arduous side of his poetry is that it is typically representative of Himachal's multiple aura – Social, Political, Economic, Cultural, and ecological. His stern faith in mankind and the life around in graphic pictures, with particular emphasis on humanity in general has been the hallmark of his poetry. So much so that his poetry seems as it has virtually been hailed "A Bruised Outcry" (Pereppan) presented in larger than life silhouette. A discerning critic can pick up fairly well vivid pictures. The poems, like 'The Tempest' (110-11), 'Without the Qualms Of Conscience' (109), 'Dance Of Death' (130-31), 'The

Drain' (141), 'Wounded Soul' (132), alone are enough to highlight poet's concerns, consternations and preoccupations. Increasingly rampant EVIL, prevalent in society, is the song he composes to sing. The sacred land of his ancestors now and then defiled, tarnished and degraded by the horrendous cacophonies and mechanized smiles of hypocrite Messiahs further provide savour of the salt to his pungent irony. In poet's own diction these are the real cheats, masters of falsehood and real devils who thrive like worms on hives. The bleak pictures of discord, disharmony, degradation, despondency and the rot that underlies contemporary society and polity need correction, alteration, adjustment and improvement. That is why the poet questions: "will ever the dark dense fog disperse to meet a new dawn?" (4). In order to answer this question, the poet dabbles and scholastically wonders more in despair than in hope. However, the poet very pertinently exploits Didacticism to take his readers ahead to a domain where dreams are likely to come true. His strong faith in the Supreme and uncompromising purity of the soul presented before perceptive readers is an affirmative and egalitarian view of life amid dwindling morals. 'Life's Truth' (113) and 'A Wish' (135-36) can serve as healthy examples.

Besides having faith in humanity's innate upsurge and purgation D.C. Chambial is a poet of philosophical and spiritual module too. 'Silence' (85) succinctly reveals his unorthodox religious proclivity. Poetry is the path of knowledge – JNANAMARGA, which is no less than treading on razor's edge. So there, indeed, is an exuberance of divine spark in creative images which add colour to beauty and reality, opines T.V. Reddy, a benevolent critic of Chambial's poetry (Introduction). There are, in fact, conspicuous issues in plenty of the world, life and times illustrated meticulously by bold images of Epiphany and spiritual illumination. These deliberate to redeem man reluctantly caught, caged, trapped, lost or fallen into the illusory thrall of ignorance. So, the poet further wishes to liberate the victims piously from the evil snare of Social malaise and

putrefaction. This antidote is equal to the cherished idea of Emancipation. In this context poems, like 'Man is Lost' (133), 'The Shores of Bliss' (116), 'The Beauteous World' (105-6), 'On the Plains of Dream' (129-30), are worth citing.

Here we find a ubiquitous Indian English Writer – the one and the only one – who successfully strikes a balanced parallel and whom one can put at par without least controversy with well-known English Romantic poets. The evenhanded play of Greek myths, Histories, Biblical allusions, Indian mythology and Fairy lore is the untouched and faultless aspect of his poetry, which requires study under a separate cover. The poems which abound in philosophical outpourings are – 'Enigma' (122), 'Dreams' (20-21), 'Death on Road' (109), and 'Life's Truth' (113). While making an enquiry into the ontology of philosophy, D. C. Chambial delves deep to discover the mystic resonance which lies at the base – the substratum of all unfathomable enigmatic poetry. However, his gradual progress in spiritual path directs him to the status of a devotee who feels little hitch in composing devotional poems to appease respective deity. Poems, like 'Shivalingam' (48), 'Prayer' (50), and 'Elusion' (55), are apt examples. Harold Bloom's curious critique: "The Anxiety of Influence" can be applied further to assess Chambial's poetry under this exegesis. In most of the poems anxiety seems to shape the sensibility of the poet. One can obviously recognize a sad tone of ill omens, and desperately painful utterances in poems such as, 'Dark Dawn' (119-20), 'Dance of Death' (130), 'Wounded Soul' (112), 'A Cry of Heart' (136), 'Bone Debris' (135), and 'Tickling Scorpions' (136-37). Perhaps, it is the quest and probe into existentialism which lead him to more elevated, and soul filling tenets of UPANISHADIC wisdom where all gross burns at the fire of knowledge; only the subtle essence rises to merge into infinity. That is why his poetry appears free from all chaos. What Keeps the reader in wonder is the unprecedented harmony and resonance that retains the elliptical movement and the respective orbit in right galaxy to display unexpected oneness – the unity.

All said and done, Chambial's poetry easily sheds off the burden of anxiety and the illusion of the serpent in the rope vanishes with the discovery of truth. Then indeed the drama of despair, anxiety, and uncertainty ends to affirm poet's faith in the all-pervading, the Omnipotent that instills mellifluous melody in the music of life. Furthermore, the most lyrical and poetic aspect of Chambial's poetry is his Pantheism. Through repeated use of native ecology, Chambial endeavours to bring man and nature in simultaneity that is to synchronize nature to keep pace with humanity. Consequently, his poetry imparts joy, delight, and bliss to both man and his natural surroundings.

Eco-Consciousness is an innate sign of growing spirituality in Chambial. Being a dweller of hills and dales, he is nearer to nature's divine construct. So he sees both manifest and unmanifest cast of divinity in thorny bushes, pricking and penetrating thorns, blooming flowers, storms and snows, cloudbursts, havoc and deluge. In delineations as such the enchanting vision and sense of wonder bind together diverse strands of thought and sensibility. 'A Wish' (135-36) for example contains a profound thought. Chambial popularly known as the poet of Mountains and Valleys by transcending rationality soars through the figments of imagination to the highest state of God realization – a rare oeuvre. Is not that "We are laid asleep in body and become a living soul"? It is the same bliss of SAMADHI in which we forget ourselves and become unaware of terrestrial existence. Preparation of the self in solitude to have a tangible communion with the greater Self is the radiant aspect of Chambial's poetry. Here are a few examples of poetry of the highest order, a vision beatific: 'Search for a Berth' (55), 'The Shores of Bliss' (116), 'The Beauteous World' (105), and 'On the Plains of Dream' (129-30). Our country is beset with many problems. Therefore, our poetry too seems deeply concerned with problems and predicaments haunting our nation today. The poet, with his humanitarian mindset, comes back to muse over and delight his readers with day today affairs and occurrences.

Extensive portrayal of Kalpana Chawla, Jayaprakash Narayan, Rajasthani Women and a host of others are not only tributes to the departed souls but weaves heaving garlands for the lost. 'Without the Qualms of Conscience' (109-10), and 'Wounded Soul' (132) are poems which compel the reader to feel and ponder. As a matter of fact, he is a poet of protest who rebels against the untruth. But his rebellion is not radical. He belongs to the genre of a mind where tranquility rules. So is able to pacify the anger that surges to see injustice. This is the reason; he has been designated as a pacifist rebel of varied tastes and hues. Moreover, what teases the mind in Chambial is the element of Ambivalence, Irony and Ambiguity which, besides being deliberate, is frequently contrived literary device. It is this mode of poetry that makes him intensely profound, intricately subtle yet meticulously meaningful. Poems like 'A Blade of Grass' (29), 'Frantic Rhythm' (37), and 'Manacles' (36) fairly illustrate the point. Animal imagery, Symbols, Allegories and Alliterations used in plenty need purposeful chiseling and point wise deciphering. 'A Triangle' (15) graphically delineates physical attraction in geometrical and astronomical terminology par excellence.

Chambial's poetic peregrination begins with *Broken Images* (1983). Herein we find the poet in a world chaotic, inverted and full of stormy discords. Gradually he travels to bridge distances and halts to relax in an agreeable world of concord, Consonance and amity. In *This Promising Age and Other Poems* (2004), his poetic pilgrimage eventually seems to hug perfection. While straight forward rejection and scrupulous disavowal of inhuman vices evenly focused find appropriate handling. Although, in an angry mood, he vehemently denounces the destructive streak seen in and around national boundaries, yet his indignation is pious, pat and pertinent, so least related to his subjective self (Sastry). Indeed, it is this enticing aspect of his poetry that protects it from being umbrageous. There flows too much of fluid which lends immediate compactness and transparency to

his poems. So much so that even an ordinary reader can enjoy the cadence. Like a sensitive YOGI, his poetry provides ample rhythm for life; feelings are ignited and emotions coupled with intellect, while intuition impels to inhale and exhale at will. In executing such a device, the poet takes recourse to a vocabulary that assumes spiritual proportions and chisels out a philosophy of his own. 'Life' (142) and 'A Falcon Freedom' (166) are examples where images metamorphose and illusion of the serpent in the rope vanishes. Life is a veritable LEELA – a play of the divine. So it has been a subject of perennial search for all sensitive and insightful minds from times immemorial. So also Chambial exhibits his personal prowess and adroitness while taking an alternative route into the occult and the epistemological. It is particularly in an age where technology is making rapid advancement while spiritual sanctities by and by are eroding. Decline in sacred moorings is looking imminent. Truly, we are drawn to an intricate net called Modernity. Over indulgence in material accumulations of the world has led us into a directionless pursuit by reducing man to a mere mortal. In an epoch as such Chambial's conspicuous advent seems to impart explicit solace and unbounded inspiration to the readers of Indian English Poetry.

Nonetheless, the unequivocal side of his poetry is that it has been read, admired and evaluated all over India by the scholars of academic repute. This critique has delegated him to a royal conclave where today he is majestically ensconced. But, what fascinates the reader most is Chambial's spell-binding hold over Asian and European minds for whose review most exalted poets of today vie for. In fact, he has such a profound impact of the westerners, so much deep seated he is in their social set up that it becomes rather difficult to sift Chambial's Indian wisdom from western thought. He is a lilting blend of both. In his poetry, multiple forms emerge, submerge, diverge, rise, ebb and soar. His is a world to meet its apocalypse in the broader spectral canopies of the consciousness. The simultaneous movement of

his poetic vision from material to the metaphysical is further asseverated. This movement starts from the centre and moves forward to make a perfect round circle. This circular movement, thus, dexterously encompasses almost the whole of humanity. The truth of the fact is that GOD, indeed, is a perfect circle and we mere mortals are like denomination of an arc to fade finally into the circle under the golden rule of KARMA. What lies at the core of genuine poetic search is Chambial's restless soul struggling hard and fast to find a birth – a hallowed hermitage not to slip into damnation but seek salvation through literary SADHANA. In spite of being tinged with under strains of melancholy and anxiety, Chambial's poetry, in totality, is a tremendous meditation on the joys of writing. How the poet aspires to articulate a realm where nothing but perfection dwells is practically notable. The lines given below accommodate a befitting epilogue: "I feel / A falcon freedom / To fathom / The deepest skies / And have a glance / Of the BEYOND / Where FULLNESS / Abounds.../ The fullness of KALPAS" (166-67).

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