

SONGS OF SONORITY AND HOPE--PART-II

(An Appraisal in Brief)

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“The Poetry of the earth is never dead”-John Keats

Songs Of Sonority And Hope(1), is the latest collection of poems by ably documented poet D.C.Chambial, introduced within a fortifying print by Authors Press-New Delhi (2018). It is split up into two parts : Hour Of Antipathy and River Of Happiness. Two simultaneous review- articles of mine on “Hour Of Antipathy”(2) then appeared in GJLL-Phenomenal Literature, Vol.2, No.2 Year-2017 and Contemporary Vibes Vo.13, No-51, Year 2018.

That is why, I am taking the second section “River Of Happiness”(85-148) for evaluative analysis/ appraisal. As is evident, this section commences with “Strife-The Leitmotif” (87), a poem and a simultaneous tribute to fishermen. It throws straight light on poet’s favorite theme of juxtaposing two opposite feelings, forming predicament of modern man, torn between emotional, rational, ideological and existential pulls. The material Marxist strife of west and emancipating spiritual ideals of east coalesce to form poet’s leitmotif. The poet himself justifies his proclivity – ‘Strife, the leitmotif of life/Goes on/In sun and shade,/Dark and light:/Rainbows,/Of hopes, dreams/And holistic haul.’(87)As the poem is a tribute to fishermen the working paraphernalia of the same come to devise a correlating imagery for delimiting both human struggle and poetic-practice. The same trait is invariably visible in other poems such as- “Divine Bliss”(93-4).

It not only concentrates on deepening of lyrical faculty but also converges in an uninterrupted stream of transcendental beauty. Way off from material rot, household squabbling and lax the poet in serene, peaceful, prayerful mood appears intoning in harmony--- ‘Here I recline under a shady tree/With my mind on a vacant spree/Seek solace at the feet of the Lord/Not to let my mind any malice hold’(93-4).Here is no hour of antipathy, no ill-will, neither sympathy nor malice. Instead humanity struggling under the indentation of caste and creed, affluence and disowned decadence skulks conspicuously for enlightenment. As the sunshine is for all and sundry, in like manner, the poet conspicuously lays bare the world of his dreams- a world where humanity is sensible enough to grow into divinity- ‘When will the sun dawn/to make us live in harmony/realize the merited right/of equality in life/instead of color and creed/the shape and size/the gender bias?’ “An Ant And I”(112-13).Perhaps, the poet is closer to Maharshi Aurobindo’s notion of divinizing humanity.

The way poet’s imagination flows and sets in profusely in his art are a poetic process hitherto undefined and unpicked. The nitty-gritty is that anyone who deserves and keeps ability to see beauty never grows old- ‘The earth created for Adam’s chastisement/can be easily transformed

into heaven/if those living here below the firmament/follow His commands on this haven' "Our Conduct" (94-5).The description of Nilgiri Mountains in Tamil Nadu is exclusively matchless as it displays the grandeur of nature in a manner cautiously portentous – 'Fog always veils it/Lest some ominous eye/Cast its spell/And corrupts the innocence high' "Wellington" (88).How man, a malicious and malevolent creature – 'Hooch the best friend of the depraved one/ever ready to sell life for a pouch even.' "A Drunkard on the road" (92-3), finds astringent expression in still more acidic imagery, while benevolent thrusts related closely to nature seems running parallel to Almighty's pranks. These such themes the poet delineates in images joyous further culls beauty in an instant of realization.

The poem "Trivandrum At Dawn" (90) fabulously depicts man in his close proximity with nature and nature in near propinquity with the creator . The intervening world apparently real in all its multiplicity evolves enchantingly beautiful in diction superbly emblematic-'I'-a mere prisoner/within the fleshy walls/where pulsates the lump of flesh/flow the rivers of blood/to keep the ten-holed-cage warm' " Sands Of Oblivion" (96-7).This poem thus reveals microcosmic origin of man by combining together material and spiritual components. Consecutively, helplessness of man before the mighty force of nature is well evident-'Man takes pride in his achievements rare/Nature in fury shows him his place pale'. "Dhanushkodi" (92).The incalculable harm man has done to nature by felling trees (against which the Chipko movement of Uttarakhand is regaining the ground)(*),by filling earth with chemical fertilizers which degrade, dry and prevent growth of plants, halt photosynthesis besides killing soil's micro-organisms .

Whereas unsustainable mining is turning green groves into desert dusts by enhancing toxics for man to fondle with atmospheric changes and environmental hazards. By and large, all this concerns poet's innate human faculty and forces him to uphold- 'In this melee of selfishness and ego/all wallow/like pigs in muck/none stops to speculate/even for a pico-second.' "Unanswered Questions" (111-12).Alongside there are ample references to nature flooded by mysteries of sounds and sights, divine presence ,charisma and existence. So much so that the poem "River Of Happiness" (115) reels in miraculous sights such as—'Perhaps, a divine mantra/to fire life in death/Lo ! there was life/tree turned green/waving leaves in air.' (115-16). Almost all participate gleefully in the human world of poet's creation and rejoice to partake in immortal feast hosted by divine spectacles.

Life in its multiple charms ,nauseas, beauty ,magnificence and ecstasies flow like a river surging in its course earthly odor, flower scents ,rain petrichor, rainbow hues, birds-beasts ,buds-leaves ,trees, snow rocks ,sand dunes ,sea sand, storms ,tempests ,tsunamis all rearing and undulating under the vast expanse of the mighty firmament .On 11th December-2003,U.N.O celebrated /declared international mountain day ,organized summits to discuss the weight and worth of mountains .Mountain worship is an ancient tradition in India.The poet is

no exception to it .There are frequent references to ritualistic worship of mountains widespread in his poetry .What's more ,the depiction of unforgettable tea-gardens fresh and aromatic where the world seems to shrink into a small space is remarkably delightful-‘After a gap of one month/picked up the bamboo basket/to pluck tea leaves/from the plants beyond/the kitchen garden’ “While Plucking Tea Leaves” (103-4). More delightful is allusion to primeval sound known as Pranavam or Om, the real and the material cause of the Universe-‘Beginning and end/coalesce into each other/call what you like.../om or boom.’ “Om”(108).As a matter of fact, what formidably underscores Chambial's lyrical faculty and dreams is the memory the onus of which goes to his intelligence ,ingenuity and resourcefulness .It is a reality that augurs his future health and well being.

Another aspect that takes recurrent forays into his poetry is prevailing movement about woman empowerment .The poet calls woman-a woman, the sole source of all good in man and his true strength .He extols women especially taking examples for their approval and esteem from ancient human history—‘*Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tarta Devata.*’ “Woman Is A Woman”(119).Accordingly woman in his poems occupy a significant place and position which stands at par with divinity. The poet in Chambial is least hesitant in extracting Christian myths of the Fall and of original sin those depict and identify woman as woe + man = the root of man's woe .Some way or another, the passage of time restores woman to her real strength and former glory. One more poem “What A Justice ”(120-21), is an attempt to question woman's purity, her virtuosity, piety and chastity in the light of illustrations such as- Sita ,Draupadi, Ahilya and Anusuya taken from India's ancient epics and legends. These mythical portrayals which excel in grace and beauty eventually give crucial charm somewhat relatively to today's much talked about slogans as-*Beti Bachao* and *Beti Parao*-all tending towards women empowerment.

In this way,Chambial's prognosis of womanhood centers around female emancipation . The poet reminds his thoughtful readers the true magnitude of Gargi,her unyielding and fearless debate with sage Yagnavalkaya and of Maitreyi's discussion on intricacies of metaphysics .Ubhaya Bharti confidently questioned Adi Shankaracharya on the art of making love. Defying all conventional norms Andal, Ammaiyaar and Mirabai pursued their on path of subtle devotion. Our constitution being secular gives equally sacrosanct rights to all faiths except lately emerging draconian laws on Love Jihad .What an oxymoron? It's even moronically incongruous .I remember once the great playwright William Shakespeare concisely alleged-‘Doubt truth to be a liar/but never doubt love.’ Jihad or Dharmayuddha is not rectitude in contemporary perspective ,it only ignorantly distorts a great religion which absorbs and assimilates all and sundry being all embracing and resilient .

Besides ,the rich mythology, architecture ,art, literature and cultural heritage provides enough scope for personal liberty and freedom of choice to two individuals .Side by side, contemporary

issues, as mentioned earlier, like pollution in environment, ecological eclipses, thick layers of harmful gases forming murky mist that cover up human habitats to increase their woes, maladies and wretchedness ,after all demand cure, care and caution -‘The malady is so deep/It needs treatment equally hard/to carry on the operation/for the pleasure of the organs/for the health of the body’ “The Malady Of Sleaze ”(133-4). In fact the surgeon in the poem is imagined to be a social reformer and the patient a disease prone ailing society .How compelling is the sardonic image of the patient offering himself at poetic altar-‘Patiently I saw them/put me/on the table/pinned/lest I should/move my limbs’ “Patiently I Saw”(134-5).

In this age when everything is going digital environmental obligations need greater preparation for participating in world-wide contests so as to get indexed into greener technologies and ways of human behavior. Additionally and poetically nature in its multiplicity and bio-diversity assumes a subjective form quite like William Wordsworth- ‘Ears so inebriated/I forgot when day and night/married ,and the breeze blew/her fans soothing as ever’ “On That Bank”(136-7).Enough is enough, there is too much about life, its meaning, goal and purpose behind existential contours and conundrums. Man has to be industrious, diligent and hard-working in order to wage battles and wars of life-‘Life is not a one winged bird/it needs two to fly/to rise to the sky/to go past the hills and canyons/to taste the pleasures that lie beyond.’ “Plunder And Thunder”(142).The poem further abounds in metaphorical beauty ,images ,symbols and pictograms moving ahead to depict the merits of cooperation ,collaboration and coexistence needed a great deal in present day perspectives.

Against such an ambience the poetic purpose grows to become relatively explicit-‘Let’s live by being closer/to decry/the beauties of nature/in upright stature/before we say good-byes/with dreamy eyes/and head for the beyond/that lies beyond the yonder hill.’ (142).Erring humanity ,their ire ,anger ,envy ,frailties and frivolities are broadly analyzed and brought to light in the poem “ Such A Mind ”---‘How can such a mind be sane? such heart is not a heart true/that abhors the skull that protects it/a heart that hates sternum shielding it’(142-3).His poetry has therapeutic value in the sense that it suggests cure for the festering sores -‘When you think of playing with fire fatal/thinking of setting a fire every hue/the shelter that you strive to rattle/does your conscience never prick you.’ “Does Your Conscience Never Prick You” (143-4).He freely revels into the imperfections of the world ,touches the evil side-the bad and the mad and uplifts to transform these into perfect poetic pieces by devising anecdotic and tell-tale device of soothing compromises .Alongside ,we can see the democratic spirit prevailing in strong traction .

Two poems “ Dissent”(144-5) that is the role of opposition in democracy and “ Wounds Of Deceit”(145-6) convey untainted message of equality ,fraternity and humanity in beautifully culled images –‘Those who stomach the weather’s vagaries to win/and sacrifice the comforts of their hearth and sleep/caring for the well being of their countrymen/ that they may stay safe and

secure and comforts reap.' "Wounds Of Deceit"(145-6). The title poem " Songs Of Sonority And Hope"(146-7) weighs each word and phrase in a set tone and tenor so as to form and exhibit a fine rigour and earnest stoicism further to ensure moral justice and wholesome pitch for sonority and hope. Overall, the poet seems anguished, anxiety being emotional recipe, seething pain within inducing the poet to articulate his angst against existing anomalies, abnormalities impieties and imperfections lurking and looming at broader continuum of time and space. The poet nowhere seems disillusioned by abstract generalizations, vagueness, ambiguities and dichotomies of character but precisely by using apt similes ,metaphors and images steers a wholesome and viable sensibility .Each word has an amazing clarity and we see the simple inevitably turning into the symbolic ,ordinary extraordinary .Scientific experiment with language being delightful slowly and steadily develops into a technique containing discrete personal aura.

An outstanding feature of poetry is imagery. An image in poetry, as in psychology, is a feeling and consciousness that on the whole covers both subtle and concrete constituents .Musically enticing,eye-catching ,sublime and deeply stirring is the threefold concrete image of the sun ,the sea and the earth-'I stand at the shore and look at the horizon/the sun slowly sinks into the sea for solace/hold each other in their lovely embrace/the earth and heaven in fiery passion.' "The Symphony "(95-6).Conspicuously picturesque and factual is the image of sterility in the desert -'A dead tree/stood amidst winds/in the desert. " River Of Happiness."(115) As mentioned earlier ,the poet, as is his intent, shifts from external world of mere appearances to the interior world of tumult ,turmoil and chaos so as to realize the ultimate reality where calm and tranquility blend into a harmonious profusion: the whole -'The life ,on this terra firma/a rare moment in eternity/to seek rapport /with Kaivalayam.' " Sands Of Oblivion "(97)The simplicity of nature and stance, minimalism in speech and voice, laconic in style and technique following lines exemplify his finely tuned craftsmanship -'The spring comes with its beauty/full of colors and scents/to bedeck the earth/a bride beautiful' "The Spring"(98) .

Genuinely, behind his oeuvres flow an entirely personal image involving no luxurious indulgence rather substituting for basic necessities of life .At places latent ,dormant ,unexpressed or pent-up feelings crop up to find prompt turn of phrase .His muse being gracefully serious and sober, meticulously conscious of his status, striving to maintain cool in whatever spheres he happens to stroll, deserves greater liking to be alike .A medley of pain ,anger ,violence, unethical conduct ,moral wantonness ,crime ,ugliness and despair on one hand and beauty ,goodness ,faith ,serenity, divinity, ethical hopes, spiritual and timeless euphoria on the other are all loaded with/for specific connotations .Although his poetry bears resemblance with 20/21st century British and Indian poets yet cautiously moves forward to maintain a distinct difference and cool evidently subjective . The sense of being subjective keeps him away/alooof from the rest of the hustling world .That is why we can see in ample measure word-pictures rendering emotional shocks , mental maladies ,sadness, monotony and loneliness

modeled in the mannerism of Louise Gluck (3) . Also the poet is well-adept in executing quick wit, pun, word-play and employing a rare breed of vocabulary .In excellent soul-stirring melody he voices forth his promises, proclivities ,protests and disagreements .He does not use poetry as a tool to fight like many of his contemporaries do ,but affably argues sans dissonance the existing cause either earthly or beyond. The cause behind two world wars, the plague and reigning Covid-19 is as debatable a point as his poetry- a fitting tete-e-tete for posterity. The poet himself asserts in his introductory note ‘The personality of the artist is lost in the cyclone of his imagination and what remains is rock solid and heavy matter called text that settles down as a poem or a work of art for the amusement and deliberation for the posterity to conduct experiment.... “Poetry, Memory And Dream ”(7).(4)

References:

- (1). Chambial, D.C. ‘Songs Of Sonority And Hope’(Collection Of Poems-2010-2017):New Delhi-Authorspress-2018.(All subsequent references and citations are of this edition with poems quoted and page numbers within parenthesis.)
 - (2).Chambial,D.C. ‘Hour Of Antipathy’Maranda :Poetcrit Publications-September 2014. (*)Quotes from the pages of/on my own Diary.
 - (3)The Times Of India: New Delhi, Friday-October-09,2020.
 - (4).Chambial,D.C. ‘Songs Of Sonority And Hope’:New Delhi-Authorspress-2018.
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