

2 TWO MINUTE SILENCE: A SEQUENCED CULTURAL FIZZ

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Abstract

“2 two minute Silence” is a collection of poems by C .L. Khatri - a well known Indian English Poet and critic .Besides editing ‘Cyber Literature’-a biannual refereed research journal, presently he teaches in the capacity of a Professor in the Department Of English, T.P.S, College-Patna(Bihar).Two Minute Silence(2014) is Khatri’s third collection of poems ,before this he has published two poetry books namely-Kargil(2000) and Ripples In The Lake(2006).The third collection of poems is composed in the sequence of the first two. The title as given above, therefore, justly and equably validates the contents as well as the motif of the poet .Herein the reader not only comes across the peculiarities of English grammar soaked into Indian national ethos ,but also meets the greater challenges posed by the cruelties, injustices and unethical social behavior rapidly growing in India’s hefty democratic set up. This article argues how the poet successfully exposes these widespread evils and then as a didactic pedagogue suggests remedies in a way entirely innovative. It further attempts to analyze the poetic practice of the poet against the backdrop of present day movements conspicuously taking place in the field of Indian English Poetry. As such ,the title poem to this collection is not shaped, as it should be, in the manner of an elegy but there are many poems those appear having an elegiac silhouette. Sensibly speaking the poet has wielded poetry as a weapon to fight against the dehumanizing and the demoralizing forces operating at national and international junctures .Cultural diversities and environmental concerns further infiltrate considerable space in this article so are dealt at length .Other major aspects like imagery and emotion building faculty too are handled efficiently in detail. Taken as a whole the article converses agreeably almost all salient features of Khatri’s poetry.

Keywords : Imagery , Maa , Evil, Dehumanizing ,Motto, Vandalize, Didacticism ,Backwardness ,Hierarchical .

At hand is an old Latin adage that says Poeta *Nasciture Non Fit* when translated it spells-the poet is born not made. True to this adage , to-day ,we find a rare breed and exceptional class of poets who are born great .Most of the poets, as it seems, in present scenario are born with a good working brain on their head than hardly the few with a gold spoon in their mouth. No matter whatever may be the reality a poet is a poet of his own class, genus ,rank ,type and individuality .This being the case , almost all poets make use of equipments essential for aesthetic creation such as –harmony, synchronization, wholeness, comprehensiveness *joie de vivre*, brilliance and intelligence As far as Indian English Poetry is concerned it seems to assume a new, fresh, faultless and pristine cutting edge day by day. Some Poets explore deep meaning pertaining to metaphysical queries while others fondly dwell upon other worldly outpourings in a manner emotive and ritualistic. C .L . KHATRI is one among the leading ,prolific and versatile luminaries practicing the poetic genre to-day in a way quite wholesome .He not only raises his voice of discontent and consternation against existing social anomalies but also brings forth in precise poetic phraseology the national and international issues vandalizing our contemporary society with a motto to reorganize through lesser didacticism .

When we hear about someone's death ,He/ She may be a national leader, a statesman ,a sport star, a film actor or our close kith or kin, we gather together and observe condolence by way of conventional ‘ two minute silence ’.This is the reason the preliminary impression the title of the book bequeaths on us is of celebration or commemoration of death. But after going through the poem we come to know that it is not an elegy written in the manner of Thomas Gray, though there are many poems in this collection having an elegiac silhouette .The poem that forms the title of the book appears on page 67and is numbered 27.Similar to the manner of the great Indian Monk Swami Vivekananda 's world famous Chicago sermon, the poet opens his poem by addressing to global community as brothers and sisters and to the makers of India's constitution as Mothers and fathers. As is his ante in trenchant poetic precision the poet indicates to the uprooted microphone ,to the torn pages of India's constitution, and the broken legs of parliament in a hefty democratic set up .A slight mockery of death at the changing traditions and values of life and times adds further savor to the salt. How India's ethnic ethos and ingrained cultural fads with the advent of modernity show an alternate shift in our ecological milieu-‘..On the death of *dhoti and pugadi* / *Oxen and coolies replaced by wheels*/....On the shrinking space, shrinking sun /Stinking water of the sacred rivers.’ “**2 two minute Silence**”(67-8).Additionally, this poem abounds in cultural vibrancy obviously conspicuous by the use of select and succinct diction that further lends it an aesthetic dimension .

This third pick- me- up collection of lyrics published in 2014 by Authors Press-New Delhi, contains 34 poem in all besides a petty- good number of Haiku which appear at the end of the book to furnish it a supplementary poetic ambience. The background being

peripheral the initial phase begins with the portrayal of a set of numbered souls. The one writhing in pain while another resting in peace. The next one murmuring for Shanti quite and quick in the manner that reminds us of T.S. Eliot. The mundane and the metaphysical further coalesce to form a concrete imagery. The poem thus is pertinently entitled 'Peaceful Soul'. Deeply rooted in the socio-political milieu of Central Bihar, Khatri's poem/poems narrate in a virulent satirical vein the insensitivities, intolerance, darker shades of realities ruthlessly trouble-torn, infected by malaise and melancholy, languishing in terror-stricken fanaticism and backwardness. He therefore reminds us most of the time his predecessor and stalwart O.P. Bhatnagar who wielded poetry as a weapon to fight against dehumanizing and demoralizing forces. How much consistent concern and persistent self-struggle these lines display- '*When water reached my neck /I thought /I would swim across it /Though I was not a swimmer/I could do it even by flapping my hands and feet.*' "**River**"(15). Another poem assumes the aura of protest and disapproval against prevailing norms of social impropriety in a fashion entirely mythical and legendary- '*The Lord of the Mountain /Dishonoured Sati, the Prakriti/Deprived Shiva, the god of subaltern /Of his due share in yajna /Offended Sati jumped into the sacrificial fire.*' "**Hell on the Hill**"(17). Being a distinguished critic Khatri's mode of whirling emotional and intellectual poetic-salvo is peculiarly unique and stunning. His vast knowledge of scriptural texts further give him free access to the spiritual corridors of India's power structures within the society. This is the reason he aptly hangs around, revives and reanimates myth and folk-lore, fastens the link between cultures thriving differently in different terrains of the subcontinent- '*Enraged Rudra unleashed his fury /Opened his third eye, started tandav /On the mountains, hills and valleys /Cloud burst, hills filled with debris/Thunder and lightning stroke at midnight.*' (P.17) Likewise one can hear a genuine cry of the poet at the miserable plight of Government schools grounded on corrupt practices - '*....in a mud of midday meals/...crowd of urchins/shouting slogans/parroting alphabets/tables /playing pitto/fighting for food.*' "**Government Schools**"(19)

As the poet has dedicated this collection of poems to - '*For / Maa / Who lives in me and breathes through me*', at the very outset, he further and farther goes on and on giving vent to his traditional, progressive and promiscuous views regarding femininity and motherhood in two successive poems- '**Homage to Maa**' and the '**Mother**'. As far as human relations are concerned, simply the uttering of the syllable- Maa - involuntarily arouses a sense of reverence, faith and love whose selfless, self-sacrificing legendary tales as a householder and head of the family are heard and admired all over the globe. That is why, the poet is philosophically and poetically apposite to assert- '*She was standing like Mother Mary /Feeding me her breast / Alas !I could not be her Christ / She bore the cross all through her life /I slept in peace, bloomed in spring.*' "**Homage to Maa**"(20) Notwithstanding traditional awe and fear, Mother's role as a chaste and cultured lady performing usual domestic chores unmindful of physical exertion and anxiety in a rural setting finds similar rustic idiom and rhetoric- '*Cooking food on chulha fed with cow dung cakes/Making noodles,*

paapars, pickle ,sattu.../Oh, the aroma of frying grains in sand !'(21) Actually ,tradition/ traditions are beliefs transmitted by word of mouth from age to age, pertaining to religious doctrines preserved from generation to generation. The way the poet weaves an intricate net of native traditions in order to preserve them for posterity rooted in the soil of the nation displays a fresh explosion of liveliness combined with an intimate sense of nostalgia. — '*She taught me: everything has its day/Kartik Purnima was the day of khaza and milk/Sweets of sesame seeds(tilkut),curd and beaten rice/On Makarsankranti ,gram flour and raw mango slice/On sattuani were the breakfast,'(P.21)* Moreover, diverse streams of culture meet in him to form a unified sensibility wherein he appears moving from motherly love to the love divine. Another aspect that depicts gradual deterioration in ancient grandeur of womanhood is growing influence of globalization .The advancement in the field of education ,industry ,commerce and technology has dragged woman to the level of a worthless wretch , a rogue and a scapegoat who is not ashamed of selling her own son or to abort the baby's babble — '*Many a Kunti casts away their babies/in the basket of river./Many a Karna loses the light of the day./They are also mothers. P.28)* However the motto that underlies this poem is the intense ardor and zeal for evoking change and reformation in existing norms of contemporary social set of systems.

Environment or eco-criticism is an additional facet that he touches with equal ease ,poise and aplomb .His descriptive mode at most of the places seems to come back to graphic, pictorial ,decorative and lifelike structure wherein we see the poet formulating sound pattern of words to convey the hidden meaning .The following lines illustrate the point precisely— '*But here you can bath in the same water umpteen times.../The Falgu ,a river without banks /Or banks without a river /Offers salvation to the dead/Privy Purse to the priestly players-/The heathen harvest of faith.'* **"The Falgu" (23)**. Although there is no direct allusion to soil and water pollution, yet there are ample of references to the aspect of cleanliness ,purity and hygiene. The damage nature has done to human habitats and their existing self finds recurrent echoes— '*...a bowl of foul water in the middle. / 'beware of fire and flood'/ fire failed flood tamed /the last we saw in 1975'*. **"Paeon to Patliputra"(24)** The fury and wrath of nature is delineated by the poet at many a places in its turbulent aspect that makes us aware of nature's plenty and profusion ,however without confusion .It further makes public the ecological consciousness of the poet— '*Friends in spring take wings/ frogs croak in rainy season/ turns cold in winter. "Haiku-11"(73)*. There is one more poem that tells us all about the unshakable and long lasting existence and imprint of natural phenomenon on the sparkle of human soul— '*A tree trunk fossil / In the centre of the Circle Park /With a concrete canopy for the head/Twelve million years old ,they say'* **"New Invention"(70)**. How close men/women are to the omnipotent presence of adorable nature in the garb of traditional sanctity is worth pondering— '*To the setting sun turns none but parvatin/To the rising sun they offer oblation. "I and They " (69)* In land of coal-mine where all pervading fury of fire rules the roost the poet not only focuses on health-hazards but impeccably brings to notice

lurking menace to ecosystem of natural balances what we call precisely Green Politics today—‘*Look ,the rising flames in the jungle / green fields turning into red stones./It will soon reach the centre /and burn all blankets and carpets /burn their broiler house .*’ **“Fire”(66)**.The ironical portrayal of life and living against this backdrop is expressively fantastic---‘*The water is sour / meat is not cooking, she said*’(**P.66**) .Another poem that delineates the malevolent, darker and diabolic invincible force of nature anticipated against the gigantic tidal waves of Indian ocean called Tsunami leading to bigger loss of life and large scale devastation is an example of verbal melody par excellence .How succinctly the poet avers-‘*You won’t believe Demon of December /Tearing seabed swelled to zenith height /... tsunami’s hoods/Devouring men in their muscular jaws/As if mountains of sea waves were marching /Forward to avenge human’s betrayal.*’ **“Tsunami ”P(44)** Notwithstanding the ailing-wailing sad plight of planet earth the poet returns to the vibrant serenity of the Himalayan topography in the preceding poem stretched to the length of four stanzas . Each stanza widened into five lines in its own way sheds light on the benevolent aspect of environmental diversity—‘*...Naina Hills/Younger brother of Himalayan range/...Chill moon at night, in day inviting sun/...Steep rise-n-fall, winding ways and waterfalls/Music of trees treating insanity...*’ **“Naina Hills”(43)**.

Imagery is another outstanding feature of poetry .By and large, an image in poetry ,as in psychology ,is a feeling and consciousness altogether. In Poetry an image can be raised to the level of a symbol by association with a variety of contents and nuances until that image comes to represent and evoke entire cluster of ideas and interrelationships of meanings which have been brought into being by the poem. Disembodied powers make impalpable objects more precise and assist to evoke an accurate emotion. The more powerful the emotions are the clearer the image becomes. How empathetic is this image-‘*I was holding her in my arms/ In the icy winter morning/Her breath slipped out of my hands/My numb fingers could not hold her/My palms were greasy, vision hazy.*’ **“Homage to Maa”(20)** At some places application of imagery ranges from mental pictures to totality of elements which make up a poem—‘*In Kedarnath flood a woman left/ her dying son on the road side with a slab/on his chest, sinking under its weight./She was also a mother.*’ **“Mother ”(28)**. Auditory such as-‘*...how pleasant it was /to hop in a puddle **chapaak** !/Clothes mud stained*’. **“Reversal Syndrome ”(37)**.2.Tactile that is physical or concrete-‘*A mammoth crowd like locust/Assembled at Gandhi Maidan.*’ **“Vijayadashami ”(42)** 3. Olfactory refers to an image that smells of site-‘*They have butchered us,/ eaten our flesh ,sucked our blood /skinned off our body as they peel off banana /killed our calves to satiate insatiable saliva.*’ **“Bull’s Reaction”(48)**. 4. Gustatory are sumptuous and tasty- ‘*Delicacies and drinks, feast of **malpua**/You are welcome without invitation.*’ **“Holi - A Festival Of Colours ”(52)**.5. Kenesthetic is the sort of image that arouses simple sensation or down-to-earth movement, as for example—‘*How exciting it was/to fetch mangoes by throwing stones ,/to steal cucumber from the field,/and escape like a goat having its fill in the field !/A fun of*

providential escape.’ **“Reversal Syndrome ”(37)** In this manner, imagery drawn by the poet struts and signifies figurative language that is to ply with the vehicles of metaphor and similes as shown in the quotes above .Besides imagery becomes an essential component in poetry and a major clue to poetic meaning, structure and effect .What is remarkable in this perspective , Khatri’s poetry conspicuously exploits meticulous representation of the settings ,dialects, customs, costumes and ways of thinking and feeling which are characteristic of a particular region specified or leveled ‘ Local Color’ .Moreover ,by the conscious use of Indian customs, ancient ethical set of instructions and deep rooted traditional upbringing the poet succeeds in devising an idiom that gives his poetry a peculiar Indian flavor. He further asserts his identity by the frequent use of Indian phrases , tell-tales, festivals ,extravaganza ,folk-lore and a rich variety of myths rooted in India’s golden past to provide English language a native aura , accent, and appearance. To be precise what is truly endeavored is to observe, discover and bring to fruition mission of creating an indigenous English local and home-grown . Khatri’s poetic output is thus an elevated movement from local to glocal (global) imbibing the spirit of –Vasudhaivkutumbkam.

Another aspect that has been apportioned at length is humanity analyzed against social injustice, economic backwardness, cultural insecurity ,political humbug and above all hierarchical set up .In doing so the poet seems to look quite realistically rather dispassionately at the emotional side of life-- pangs and pleasures ,joys and sorrows ,nostalgia ,frets, frowns, peace ,calm, serenity ,irony and optimism .Herein lies pleasure of reading KHATRI’S poetic ID that does not for a moment drain ,deplete or bore readers. It always calls for active interest ,inquisitiveness , curiosity on behalf of readers and in rotation offers them sense of love ,peace , and faith in India’s age-old cultural ethos. Man he avers is an architect of his destiny---‘*Situations impotent/ potent the man/in realization/I am a peaceful soul /I am a blissful soul .*’ **“Peaceful Soul ”(14)**. The poet like Pablo Neruda(1904-1973) asks to be introspective. Look within, says he, penetrate to find out the self, the meaning of life is purposeful—‘*Lock on every door/someone knocking from inside/time to break the lock*’ **“Haiku ”(53)**. Besides ,Life according to the poet, has multiple challenges. The wheel of time revolves and we have moments of acute agony , upsetting distressful experiences instantly replaced by candid courage, hope and perseverance. Like a stoic the poet stands still ,feels and begins to analyze a positive thought that imparts him immense health and strength—‘*Spring! I will no longer wait for you/I will work out a spring /with the snowflakes of winter .*’ **“I Am a Bird ” (49)** Likewise poet’s love for the nation and the native land speaks highly of comforts and warmth of soil pitched against pains and suffocations of separation. To be genuine ,Khatri’s poetry encompasses almost all salient features of wonderful Indian culture ,a culture well known for its tremendous variety displaying extraordinary unity, harmony as well as integrity. A multicolored stunning mosaic inviting the love ,admiration ,friendliness and care of all and sundry similarly and simultaneously. Although there is ample of scope for further study, yet I

feel euphoric in summing up my premise. The collection *2 two minute Silence*, despite excellent thematic designs, may, as it seems, suffer from an excess of unnecessary adjuncts in structural cohesion, speech acts, distinction between sentence and actual colloquial utterance or intra-sentential relations, but side by side it contains some remarkably sublime segments of greater significance displaying a unified, sensitive and sensible sensibility altogether. May his dreams of Akhand Bharat come true!

Reference:

1. Khatri, C.L. : *2 two minute Silence* :New Delhi : Authors Press, 2014-print. (All subsequent verse citations are to this edition followed by page numbers within parentheses)

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

(PUBLISHER'S DESK)

SURESH CHANDRA PANDE, Born in Nainital, U.K. on 2nd October 1955 gained an M.A. in English Literature in 1976 & a Ph.D. in Indo-Anglian Literature in 1983 from Kumaon University-NAINITAL, Alongside having a sustained and checkered Teaching/Academic career. Dr. Pande's POETRY/ESSAYS have been published extensively in India & Abroad -both in Anthologies & Literary Journals. In 1980 his first poem appeared in "INDIAN VERSE BY YOUNG POETS" published by the United Writers Workshop-KOLKATA, then in "MODERN TRENDS IN INDO-ANGLIAN POETRY" in 1982 & "PREVALENT ASPECTS" in 1983. In 1983 his Research Papers were also published by "BHARAT PROTIVA"-A monthly journal devoted to Indian Culture, then in "CONSIDERATIONS"-An anthology of critical articles edited by Niranjana Mohanty. In 1984 & 1985 his works appeared in "POETRY" & "POETRY TIME" respectively. Almost after the gap of a decade in 1995 his first collection of POETRY "I AM A SEA" was published, then JULY 1996 onward his poetry & critical writings made regular appearance in "KALYANA KALPATARU" -An English Monthly for the propagation of spiritual ideas & love for God. Dr. Pande has attended POETIC SYMPOSIA-A seminar conducted by the Department of Language & Culture in Shimla (H.P.) In 1998-99 his first Biography appeared in "INTERNATIONAL WHO'S WHO OF INTELLECTUALS"-13th Edition from I.B.C. Cambridge, England. In 2003 Dr. Pande became a member of "POETCRIT"-A Biannual Journal of Poetry & Criticism published from MARANDA (H.P.) This Journal has published more than a dozen of creative/critical writings & still

publishes his contributions regularly .Dr.Pande is also a regular contributor to many literary Journals & Periodicals published in & across INDIA .In 2009 his work made a fruitful appearance in an anthology of NINE Poets Published by HOLI-BHUBANESWAR-ODISHA(India).In 2011 the same Publisher brought out another anthology entitled “VOICES OF UNITED ELEVEN” in which Dr.Pande was given a place of pride .Mohammed Fakhruddin’s-“POETRY & POETICS: CONTEMPORARY WORLD POETRY” first published in 2014 & prescribed for *Post Graduate courses* of many Universities- from BANGALORE(India) also included some of his poems .International Poets Academy (Intercontinental)-Chemmencherry, CHENNAI conferred a citation of Highest Honour “EXCELLENCE IN WORLD POETRY AWARD” on him at World Poetry Day Celebration on 5th Day of January 2010.The Home Of Letters BHUBANESWAR-ODISHA also conferred on him “EDITOR’S CHOISE AWARD” for Creative & Critical Writings on 7th JANUARY 2011. Two latest works on INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS by eminent contemporary authors edited specifically for UNIVERSITY course- outline comprise Dr.Pande’s observations & views. Review of his latest poetry collection has appeared in POETCRIT-an international journal. A seminar sponsored by U.G.C. & I.C.S.S.R organized at the Department of English of D.A.V.P.G.College--Dehradun was attended by Dr.Pande as a delegate .More recently as a chosen major delegate he went to PUNE—Maharashtra to participate & present his paper at an INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RELIGION LITERATURE & CULTURE held on 15-16 September 2017.
