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**POET
DR. MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR
HIS MIND AND ART**

Edited by :
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BILINGUAL POET

DR. MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR

— Dr. Suresh Chandra Dwivedi
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Of the many Indian poets whose literary careers were shaped by poetry in the post-independence India of 20th century, the name of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of them. He is a progressive poet of renown. His poetic career covering several decades demonstrates his humanistic vision from beginning to end. His many books of poems have been translated into English; viz - 'Forty Poems' by Amir Mohammed Khan and Prof. L. S. Sharma, 'After The Forty Poems' trans. by Professor Ram Sevak Singh Yadav, Prof. Vareedra Kumar Varma and Amir Mohammed Khan, 'Exuberance and other poems' trans. by Dr. Ravinandan Sinha, 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry' trans. by Dr. H.C. Gupta, 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception' trans. by Dr. D. C. Chambial, 'Poems : For The Better World' trans. by Mr. Kedar Nath Sharma, 'Passion and Compassion' trans. by Dr. P. Adeshwar Rao. I have gone through most of the works of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar. In all these works the thread of his humanistic vision can be seen vividly. He wrote poems to bring about a change in the world. His humanistic vision has its own distinction : it is connected with a world vision. He believes that a progressive, prosperous and purposeful world can be constructed. His poetry contains joys and sorrows of common men. He is endowed with the gift of free imagination dedicated to bring about change in our soulless heartless, dead, disintegrated,

disunited, disillusioned capitalistic world where common man is foredoomed to be exploited, cheated and looted at every step. Prof. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a first rate intellectual, who analyses, interprets, evaluates and describes his emotions in the light of his humanistic vision. The forces of establishment and power - both Governmental and non-Governmental have crushed the hopes and dreams and ambitions of common people. A poet like Prof. Mahendra Bhatnagar uses irony to expose the fraud of exploiters. He has ultimately emerged in his poetry as a champion of the common humanity. He so often exposes the enemies of the labourers and the peasants of India. With his humanistic vision he constantly compels the readers to distinguish between power and propriety. He is alert, careful, and cautious, sometimes reminding us occasionally of Brecht, Auden, Pablo Neruda and of Carl Sandburg.

Like them he is a spokesman of the people, and he employs a rare sensitivity, a rare intellectuality and a rare humanity like them. Without the quality of their free imagination and immense love for the people Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems would not have seen the light of the day. A humanitarian poet he has always given his eyes and ears to his mother India. If one wants to know the sufferings and agonies of common people in India, he must give his days and nights to the poetry of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar. His poem 'Helplessness' typical of its kind reveals not only his own helplessness but also of the common people of India :

Thrust upon, undesired life, I lived.
Every instant, every step, shame I lived
History, now you ask me what
Folly and dirtiness of the world, I lived.
('Helplessness')

I have quoted this poem because this is a poem which reflects his free imagination and humanistic vision fully. The poet opposes those forces which resent change. The last 110 years have been the years of wars, terrorism, apartheid, exploitation, unemployment, violence, criminalisation of politics, betrayal of godmen and bureaucrats. The dynamic poet Mahendra Bhanagar powerfully attached to this period of moral degeneration and disintegration. He is rightly of the view that this period has been a period of shame, helplessness and corruption all over the world. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry mirrors our era of shame, helplessness and corruption. As an intellectual he

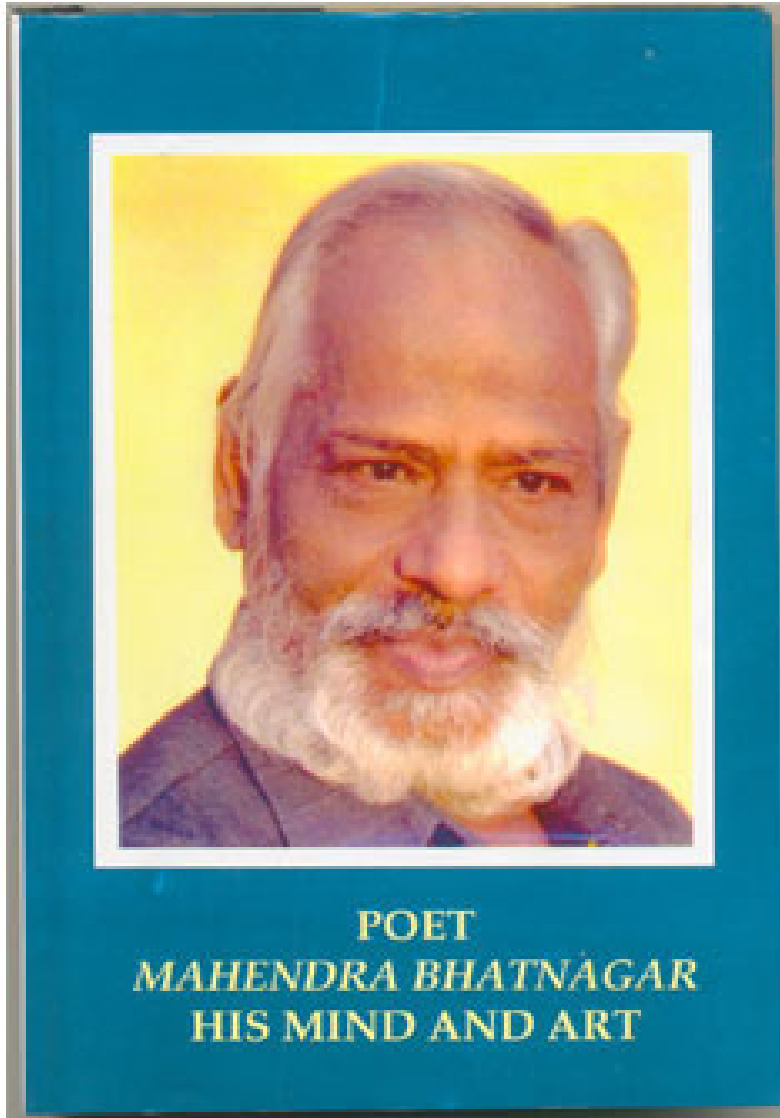
stands on earth and questions, examines and tests terrestrial things. He employs irony and understatement to expose the enemies of people. He does not spare even those who are at the helm of affairs. Like Mulk Raj Anand and Premchand, the novelists he takes the side of the people and not the fascists, dictators and capitalists. We do not find servility syndrome or tendency of hero-worship in Mahendra Bhatnagar. In his several volumes of poetry, he emerges as an artistic reporter of the agonies and dreams of people. His poems have authenticity and sureness of death, and dynamism, truth, beauty and goodness of life. His great and valuable poetry should not be underestimated because of the fact that he is a Hindi poet and originally wrote in Hindi. Indian criticism does not have that free imagination, love for people and humanistic vision which creative writers have in abundance. Critics are either slaves of ideology or write with some selfish motive to please Academies or some gods. But a poet like Mahendra Bhatnagar is always free and has actively participated in the drama of mankind. The humanistic vision of Mahendra Bhatnagar is broader than that of Muktibodh and Kedar Nath Agrawal. His humanistic vision often combines compassion of Gautam Buddha, martyrdom of Jesus Christ, love for common objects of Kazuyosi Ikeda, commonness of Auden, skepticism of Brecht and involvement with mankind of John Donne. He is a fine poet of people's consciousness and his volumes of poems confirm this. Each poem gives a definition of life; each poem gives a clarification of life. He uses people's thoughts, consciousness and their language adeptly. So far as sensuous comprehension of thought is concerned, so far as love for people is concerned, so far as exposure of fascists, tyrants, terrorists and enemies of people is concerned, he is second to only a few. So far as quality of depiction of criticism of life with a sense of poetic truth and beauty is concerned he is second to none. He is clearer than Muktibodh, wider in emotions than Agyeya, deeper than Kedar Nath Agrawal and more readable than Shamsheer Bahadur Singh.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar does not belong to any group or coterie of poets and critics. All his poems as well as his entire corpus suggest that man belongs to a large family. Man cannot live and should not live like an island. Man should choose to love and help each other and fight against enemies of people, country and democracy unitedly. Every man is a part of mankind.

Last but not the least, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar knows Indian people and their pathetic conditions. He has given an authentic poetic record of the common humanity of

India. He is a good observer of the life around him. His honesty, integrity, sincerity, authenticity and brevity are appealing and so are his sensitivity, subjectivity and tempestuous poetic capacity. He is a prolific poet whose books cannot be forgotten. He observes everything through his free imagination and humanistic vision. One is astonished to see the wide scope and vast canvas of his poetry which surveys all the occupations, classes and regions of India. The poet is seen shaking hands with the crowd, talking to them and rubbing shoulders with them. His books of poems reveal the collective wisdom of the people. The wisdom lies in synergy, cooperation, unity, collaboration, hard work, naturalness, peace and in Auden's thought - "We must love each other or die." and Arnold's thought - "Oh love! let us be true to each other." Mahendra Bhatnagar is a great poet of 'living moments and people alive.'





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Mahendra Bhatnagar :
A Prosilient Poet of Optimism and Certitude

– Dr. Anita Myles

To critically evaluate a collection of translated poems is an arduous task because the critic's attention is equipollently divided between the creator and the translator. The poems of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar, an eminent poet of Hindi have been so adroitly translated by various scholars that there lies a thin line between them and the original composition by the poet. Many a times the reader feels so comfortable with the translation in English that he tends to forget the original mind from where the ideas and thoughts have overflowed. Hence equal credit goes to the translators for having accomplished the task in such an immaculate, unblemished fashion. However, the purpose of this research paper is to evaluate the translated poems in a manner which would highlight the poetic qualities of Mahendra Bhatnagar - particularly his theme and style.

In a work of art there has to be a proper combination of sensibility and expression. Content and form ought to be harmoniously adapted to one another. Excess of form results in artificiality while excess of content inevitably leads to boldness. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar maintains a fine balance between form and content, sensibility and expression in his poetry. He develops his theme on two levels : the naturalistic, that is external imagery and situation and the surrealistic, that is the poet's dreams, visions and psychic analysis of situations. Like any other artist Mahendra Bhatnagar is a creator of his own world coloured by his very personal thoughts, presented artistically.

Mahendra Bhatnagar has been involved with the writing of poems for the past six decades. The translated poems have been compiled in seven volumes, namely '*Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar*' (1968), '*After the Forty Poems*' (1979), '*Exuberance and Other Poems*' (2001), '*Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's* 2002), and '*Death-Perception : Life-Perception*' (2002). These poems have been translated into several foreign and Indian languages.

As a poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is very careful in selecting words and invariably these words are developed in the form of powerful symbols or images. Life like word pictures provide a great force to his poems. Through his poems Mahendra Bhatnagar has said volumes about life. Words for him are alive, walking and communicative. In '*It Has Never Happened Before*' he writes :

Words with feet

Words that work and run

Not one

But so many of them.

(*Exuberance and Other Poems*' p.23)

Adding more puissance to the capability of words he goes on to say -

Words

Do not walk on crutches

Their feet

Are winged

They rise to the boundless sky.

(*Exuberance and Other Poems*' p.23)

But today the aesthetic representation and expression of words has become limited. The 'unfettered voice' of the poet becomes choked all of a sudden. Man is the creator of words but contemporary decadence and spiritual sterility have caused a decline in the finer values of life robbing fine arts of their ecstasy and enchantment. Today even these powerful words fail to convey the plight of modern man. Nevertheless, the poet is highly optimistic that one day words will be free of this bondage. Poetry will be able to express the truth in an uninhibited manner. Hence Mahendra Bhatnagar is not prepared to accept negatation of 'words' as a medium of expression. He writes hopefully :

Let the voice be free,

Unbound,

Speak -

This softness will end!

And each word will become radiant!

(*Exuberance and Other Poems*' p. 29)

Rabindranath Tagore.

Nature is invariably a backdrop in Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry but it is mostly used to explore the human situations. *'The Splendour of the Earth'* is fully devoted to the description of Nature. The earth is -

Bedecked with fineries,

A bewitching beauty every branch today,

Carefully adorned with foliage patterns.

(*'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar'* p. 24)

He personifies the wind in the following lines -

O Wind!

Mad and over-brimming with youth

Come, kissing

These new green leaves!

(*'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar'* p. 22)

Again,

Repeatedly,

See how

The eager wind

Knocks the door -

Expected, unexpected!

(*'Exuberance and Other Poems'* p. 1)

The poet feels that we must spend more time in the nature, he believes that there is a living spirit in nature which has a healing, soothing power. Each object of nature, for instance the moon and the stars, if observed closely help in resolving the intricate mysteries of life -

Know the mysteries of life,

Talk to the moon and stars.

(*'Death-Perception : Life-Perception'* p. 41)

Nature has the message of selflessness.

In the early poems the poet seems to be fascinated by the moon. Several poems have the moon-imagery in them. The moon is personified in the following lines and is shown to spread its radiance all around :

With happiness oozing out of each breath,

With hopes nectareous

And thirst eternal;

Poet Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : His Mind And Art / 2

Clasping light luminous to his heart!

Cosy lies the moon on the star-spangled carpet!

(*'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar'* p.40)

So fascinated is the poet by the beauty of the moon that he yearns to have physical communion with this great mystery of nature. He writes :

**Please pause in your path and enshrine me softly
in your heart!**

(*'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar'* p.48)

In the ensuing poem, *'Moonlight'* it seems that the moon has heard his plea for the 'moonlight approached' him at night, played on his rooftop and all of a sudden fled away at the approaching dawn. The poet is left with mixed feelings of sadness and joy when he writes :

This moonlight speaks not to me no one knows why,

Fills the heart with strange nectar this moonlight!

(*'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar'* p.50)

Even the *'Chakore'* is thrilled by the presence of the moon. The moonlight brightens up the world of not only man but also the *'Chakore'*.

One of the most outstanding qualities of Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is his unflinching optimism which is conspicuously present from the first volume of poems to the last one. Infact, optimism seems to be the forte of the poet for it encourages him to ride the rough tempestuous sea of life where unexpected and inexplicable calamities present themselves before man time and again. In *'Conviction'* he writes :

Firm is the conviction

Someday the sky shall clear of dark clouds!

Sunny days, not one but countless

Shall descend on earth

With laughter pure chipping with delight!

(*'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar'* p.88)

Again,

Night / Black night

Shall pass away ... shall pass away!

(*'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry'* p.31)

Poet Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : His Mind And Art / 3

Similarly,
**Undoubtedly,
Light
Will conquer darkness,
Yes, undoubtedly!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 37)

Another example of optimism is the poem entitled '*Compatibility*' where the poet says :

**I sing
I sing the songs of victory!
I sing
about the triumph of life over death!**

('Death-Perception : Life-Perception' p. 66)

Coupled with the poet's optimism is his determination to live life to the lees. He does believe in destiny and that man is a mere puppet in the powerful ever tightening grip of destiny yet he encourages one to live on with grit, fortitude and determination. To quote the poet :

**O Winged steeds of Destiny!
Holding thy reins
With confidence
And with firm hands,
We will pull them
To give ye direction,
Every time!**

('After the Forty Poems' p. 3)

Again,

**Man's life is filled with helpless moments;
The days and nights are all dark and dreary!**

('After the Forty Poems' p. 71)

Yet he is confident that one day by his efforts man will be able to break through the 'citadels of distress and destruction'. In his poem '*Enlightenment*' Mahendra Bhatnagar writes :

**There is nothing one can control!
O, nothing indeed
Does life
Mean – 'Helplessness'?**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 119)

True enough 'man is powerless before chance' but this does not imply a complete mute surrender. Mahendra Bhatnagar's optimism is similar to Robert Browning's who stated that life is a struggle and that man is a fighter who has to combat each attack of destiny with bravery, courage and stoicism. He writes :

**Come
Let's strike
Strike together -
The situation will change,
Rocks and sprout,
And will dress up
In verdure!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 163)

Thus the poet's repeated message is a sort of reconciliation with destiny. One cannot avert the harsh strokes of destiny but can definitely bear them with dignity, courage and determination.

Man's tragedy is enhanced by materialism and selfishness - an idea which Mahendra Bhatnagar explores in his poem '*A Mirage*'. Life is a gift of God which man ruins by being in constant pursuit of wealth and pleasure. However, this material pursuit leads only to a

**Shattered and disorderly life
malady stricken / frustrated wounded life
momentary
eager to fall into
the death-pool!**

('Death-Perception : Life-Perception' p. 46)

The poem '*Building*' contains an appropriate imagery portraying the self centred man of today. The very architecture of modern cities reflects the selfishness of men. Mahendra Bhatnagar writes that architecture today is

**An image
Of the cramped heart
A mirror
Of self
Trapped in itself!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 9)

Trust is easily broken and life becomes meaningless, empty

'*Destroying his identity*'. In the long run the selfish people go ahead in disrupting the peace of the nation. To quote the poet :

**Let a handful of selfish people
Not plunder the wealth of the developing nations!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 141)

Religion is a pliable tool in the hands of a 'narrow minded' man who is utterly '*unfamiliar with benevolence!*' The poet longs for a change when he writes :

**If only once we
Our dwarfishness
Our meanness
Could abandon
And could experience
Jubilation
Of getting on the summit!**

('Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry' p. 91)

The sensitive soul of the poet is moved and immensely pained to see the plight of suffering man. There are several poems which portray blatantly the stark realities of life. For instance in '*Inhuman*' he writes :

**Racial jealousy born
Religious hatred spread
Regional-linguistic jealousy barked,
Dirty is environment!
Giant's garb everywhere!
Breaths choked
Polluted air
Poison-mixed water
Restless life!**

('Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry' p. 149)

Everywhere there is the sense of betrayal and loss, rootlessness, loneliness and deep isolation.

In spite of his optimism, determination and dauntless faith in a better life Mahendra Bhatnagar cannot ignore the fact that modern man leads a life of isolation. The very title of the poem '*Lonely*' indicates this. Here the poet says that though modernisation has given us all sorts of physical comforts yet at heart man is lonely; he has no one to talk to, '*to share the secrets of his heart*' or

'*someone whose door / you can knock boldly*'. The agony is apparent in the following lines :

**All are unfamiliar
All are strangers
In this large, sprawling city!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 79)

Man has donned the garb of animals, he is responsible for his own deterioration :

**We ourselves
Have abandoned the shape of man
And have put on animal hides,
We growl
And snatch away the lives
Of our own descendants!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 127)

The note of compromise and acceptance of the present human condition resounds in Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry. If loneliness is one's destiny, accept it willingly and whole-heartedly :

**To try to escape it -
Is aberration!
Only accepting it
Is a boon!
Therefore
Accept this willingly,
Respect this whole-heartedly!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 145)

Nevertheless, the poet is not without hope for love is a boon in human life. He writes :

**In this life
There is nothing
Nothing indeed
More beautiful than love!**

('Exuberance and Other Poems' p. 65)

Mahendra Bhatnagar is also aware of the fact that in the backdrop of selfishness love is difficult to achieve. It is overshadowed by various evils.

Mahendra Bhatnagar's collection entitled '*Death-Perception : Life-Perception*' deals with the concept of death in its varied

aspects. Paradoxically enough the poet is grateful to 'Death' as it makes him realise the value of 'Life'. Death teaches us the real meaning of love, so why should we fear death. He writes :

**Death made life
very beautiful,
Transformed this world,
in fact,
into a pleasant heaven,
We learnt the meaning of love!**

('Death-Perception : Life-Perception' p. 4)

Fear of death makes life worthless and one cannot enjoy the divine gift of life. It is difficult to compromise with this positive attitude towards death; one does not know much about death because it is a 'mystery' and 'queer puzzle' or as the poet terms it '*a wonderful puzzle*'.

The poet comes out with a quaint and novel idea that death gives meaning to the existence of God. It is a truth that :

**If there were no death,
God wouldn't have any existence,
man
would have never reconciled
with his fate!**

('Death-Perception : Life-Perception' p. 14)

Death which is the reality of life - '*the final truth / About every life*' has many forms : natural or accidental. It is the conclusion of life, no doubt, as also 'the writs of Providence'. However, the poet disapproves of terminating life by suicide or murder or other forms of destruction.

Several poems in the collection point towards the unbreakable ties between death and birth. If there is birth, death must necessarily follow. In '*Destruction : An Assault!*' Mahendra Bhatnagar draws up a comparison between birth and death. Death is a truth as much as birth is. His concept of life and death is beautifully summed up in the poem '*A Wish*' where he urges mankind to enjoy life as long as it is possible. To quote him :

**Let there be
no existence of death-serpent**

**in the garden of life,
let human self
not be terrorized
of death scare!
Let every person
enjoy life!**

('Death-Perception : Life-Perception' p. 58)

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's ideas about life and death may

be

equated with the Tagorean concept. Tagore in all his poems specially '*Gitanjali*' feels that life and death are complementary to each other and as birth results in death similarly death prepares the human being to embark on a higher journey of the soul. Mahendra Bhatnagar also visualizes that the shackles of death ultimately lead to the final liberation of the soul and hence instead of being terrorised by the idea of death we must accept it as an essential part of human existence. Related to his life-death-emancipation syndrome is the common-current of optimism found in both these poets. Life is not to be rejected but should be accepted as an essential challenge.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems have not only thematic charm leading to tranquillity of the mind for the reader, but they also have enough subtleties of poetic serenity to provide aesthetic satiation to the readers and critics alike. His poems are highly pictorial, energised with powerful symbols and enjoyable imagery. At the same time the poems are full of an extremely high level of sensuousness. While enjoying his poems one is reminded of statements by John Milton and Matthew Arnold who claimed that good poetry must be simple, sensuous and life like. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry proves true to this touchstone. It must also be mentioned that Mahendra Bhatnagar's sensuousness is not limited like that of Wordsworth to merely the realms of sights and sounds; his sensuousness is complete and comprehensive like that of John Keats.

Undoubtedly, the translations fail to do justice to his poetic talent so far as rhythm, resonance and poetic diction are concerned. However, a poet of his stature needs to be translated so that his

ideas may be conveyed to a greater number of readers.

Contemporary life, whether in India or in other nations, is full of destructive complexities. While man is struggling for gaining material affluence and thereby entering into cut throat and unhealthy competition ignoring religion, he tends to be mentally disturbed, psychologically unbalanced and spiritually sterile. While loss of faith in religion has snatched away the only possible platform for reconciliation and inner peace, such poems as composed by Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar may provide him an alternative succour for his troubled mind and agonized existence. The optimism and the message of reconstructive idealism found in Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is the real need of the hour.



Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : A Avant-Grade Poet

– Mrs. Purnima Ray

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a versatile Hindi poet of India. Many collections of his poems have been translated into several languages, mostly in English. The English collections are : *Forty Poems* (1968) *After The Forty Poems* (1979), *Exuberance and other poems* (2001), *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry* (2002), and *Death-Perception : Life-Perception* (2002), and the translators are also the luminous personalities in their respective fields - they are poets, professors and scholars : Dr. Ravinandan Sinha, editor of 'The Quest' and Prof. of English, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi; Dr. D.C.Chambial, editor of 'Poetcrit' and Prof. of English; Dr. H.C.Gupta, Ex. Prof. of English, Jiwaji University, Gwalior (M.P.); Dr. Ramsevak Singh Yadav, Prof. of English, Kurukshetra University (Haryana); Lakshmi Shankar Sharma, Prof. of English, Vikram University, Ujjain (M.P.); Vareendra Kumar Varma, Prof. of Philosophy; and Amir Mohammad Khan, Journalist.

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar's richness of thought, simplicity of style and lucidity of language have marked him as one of the avant-grade Indian poets. All the translators mentioned above expressed their observations regarding his poetry in their own way, but it remains all the same - they spoke highly of him as a poet, his poetic abilities and sensibilities. And I am sure that every reader of his poems will not find their remarks as exaggerations. I am also such a reader who wanted to translate his poems while reviewing his poetry-collection *Death-Perception : Life-Perception*. But as a translator I cannot agree with those critics who say that his poems are difficult to translate. For poet Mahendra expresses his deep thoughts in a very simple manner, so the form automatically becomes simple and the language is close to our heart. I have noticed surprisingly that these translators did their job well. As a translator I special advantage that I know Hindi. So when I compared the two : the original Hindi and the translated

English, I always felt that the original spirit was not lost. Again, to retain the lyrical cadence is not difficult in Bengali or in French, as French is a very sweet and flexible language like Hindi, and there are many nearest meanings for a single word in Bengali. Yet I always tried to be true to the original.

In the present volume I selected more than one hundred of his poems from five collections of his poetry mentioned above. I would like to present my views regarding these poems. Dr. H.C.Gupta has rightly observed in his foreward to *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry* :

".... Here, it may be pointed out that Prof. Bhatnagar has composed poems in all the three modes - narrative, dramatic and lyrical; the lyrical is his penchant His poetry, to be sure, bears and carries the stamp of sincerity and authenticity ..."

Yes, what Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar says, he can confirm it boldly, for he has such convictions. His poems are also very suggestive and symbolic, and that is why his poems are very sound from the aesthetic point of view. His spirituality finds expressions in many of his poems. So his poems addressed to a beloved are also spiritual in tone, as we find in Rabindraanath Tagore's poems. And Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar's spirituality is rooted in Vedantic philosophy. His spirituality lies in humanism, the religion of the poet. He suggests the pathetic modern life, yet he is an optimist. Prof. L.S.Sharma better explains these qualities in his editorial note on *Forty Poems* :

".... His is a voice, mighty and sonorous raised in support of Humanism and Progressivism. In fact he has not cared to write within the narrow limits of an 'ism', nor has his genius flowed within banks determined by a particular movement in Hindi Literature. He is made of more perennial stuff. He is decidedly not a poet of cloud-cuckoo-land of romance nor is he an escapist. He is a poet of insuperable optimism, Himalayan determination and spiritual regeneration, and has plenty of sympathy for the under-dog. The poet in Mahendra Bhatnagar is fully conscious of his responsibility to society and also to art. Comprehensiveness of view, catholicity of thought, simplicity of expression, depth of emotions and chiselled vocabulary - all have been combined to good effect in Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry"

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is a philosopher, so like a true philosopher he sees everything objectively without being biased. He is a poet who worships 'life' and finds a source of inspiration in 'Death' :

**The death's orchestra plays on,
The mango-groves once jubilant and gay
Are silent and deserted now;
But with faith divine
In the midst of tears and sighs
The man laughs on!
The man lives on
By the cravings of love!**

(Lust For Life)

He points us to see the fact that we are standing on the backbone of 'Death', so that our desire for life is being stirred again and again :

**Death is;
Death is imminent,
Unavoidable -
That's why
Life is so desired!**

(Gratitude)

Although we get scared by it every now and then, yet it is acceptable, and for that 'life' itself is grateful to 'Death' :

**Death element / feeling
Minute by minute death-tension
Are acceptable,
Gratitude
To death
Life's gratitude!**

(Gratitude)

For 'Death's contributions to 'Life' are unnumbered :

**Death's made life
very beautiful,
Transformed this world
in fact
into a pleasant heaven,
We learnt**

**the meaning of love
only then
true's true!**

(Gratitude; Again)

And the most important achievement of 'Death' is that it :

**Transformed man
into higher beings
than immortal god!**

(Gratitude; Again)

The poet can establish a truth that man's all philosophy including the idea of God revolves round 'Death' :

**If there were no death,
God wouldn't have any existence,
man
would have never reconciled
with his fate!**

(The Truth)

For man is always led by this fact that 'Death' is imminent', so his idea of God is nothing but :

**a symbol,
God - a proof
of man's helplessness
of readiness after death ...**

(The Truth)

The poet equates the relation between 'Life' and 'Death' through a fine imagery :

**Death
An unbreakable string
Tied to birth ...**

(Life-Death)

So he rightly poses the stoic question :

**Birth :
Why a jubilation?
Death :
Pain ...!
Why ?
Birth-death
When equal ?**

(Life-Death)

The poet can justify what he says regarding this by a logical fallacy :

**Morning is red
Evening is red
Morning-evening are one.**

**Wail on birth
Wail on death
Birth-death are one ...**

(Equal)

It seems that he wants to say that as one cannot detach 'Death' from 'Life', similarly 'Life' cannot be detached from 'Death' :

**Death -
a birth
over and over again
of soul ...**

(Reality)

Like the ancient Greek philosopher poet Mahendra Bhatnagar says :

this manifest world is the only truth ...

(Reality)

Yet he confirms :

**Death - a truth,
Life - a truth**

(Reality)

He shows us that the victory of 'Life' over 'Death' lies in the faith :

**Have faith
Life
will be victorious,
fear not the wicked,
fear not ...**

(One Day)

Like a miltonic hero the poet discloses the way :

**If death
destroys us
Let us**

**strike back at it,
Let us
sing the glory of life,
let us
strike a severe blow at
Yama, death! ...**

(Purpose)

The poet sings paeon of 'Life', but there is something more special in his singing :

**I sing
about the triumph of life
over death! ...**

(Compatibility)

Like the post-Tagorean Bengali surrealist poet Jivanananda Dash he admires the wealth of 'Life' :

**I sing dauntlessly
the triumph of life-bud
of the dearest thing!
I sing
again and again! ...**

(Compatibility)

One may compare the words 'again and again' quoted above with Jivanananda's famous poetic line - 'abar asiba phiré' (I will come back again). The words which poet Mahendra Bhatnagar used are not the same, but the total effect remains the same :

**The sounds that echo
in the sky of the graveyard
of the liberated-selves of carefree birds
are translations
of my
life-sentiments!
The compatriots
of my
life-adorations! ...**

(Compatibility)

Here he establishes one truth that poets from ages to ages sing of life in their unique ways. Perhaps for that reason the poet can romanticize 'Death' :

**You'll come -
on tip-toes,
Surprising
Like a clever girl,**

**Alright,
Accepted!
My beloved,
your this game
Is welcome ! ...**

(To the Fairy of Death)

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar's creativity finds its fullest expression when he uses the words 'passing away' instead of : 'Death' :

**Death might be overtaking
while dreaming,
Prana
might be out from the body
just then.**

**A dreaming man
Passing away! ...**

(The Mode of Death)

The poet accepts indirectly the will of God behind 'Death', so he says to himself, and at the same time to us to renounce all earthly attachments :

**Never remember,
Even today,
Listen,
Do not light the memory-lamp! ...**

(Good-bye)

He does not forget to remind us the most precious things of life, and he puts all this so masterly in the mouth of a dying-person :

**Adieu!
O the springs of the world
Adieu!
O, the shining moon
The twinkling bright stars
Adieu!**

**Adieu
O, the high waves of the sea! ...**

(I Bow Thee)

In a way, he values most the Nature surrounding us, as Mrityunjaya in Rabindra Nath Tagore's short story 'Guptodhan' (The Hidden Treasure) exclaimed :

I want sunlight, air, sky etc.

For poet Mahendra Bhatnagar knows what ultimate truth is, so he makes a good-bye to an illusory world behind him :

**Fluttering
wings of illusion,
Eyes
Profuse with love
Adieu!
The strings of
An inextricable knot
The unrealised hopes
Adieu!
Adieu!**

(I Bow Thee)

'An Ascetic' is an important poem in the sense that the poet gives here a message to the strife-torn world we are living in :

**He who sings
Songs of life
at the edge of doom,
One day -
he will attain
an immortal place
by changing his shape,
Preserve this
heritage
by making it a 'stupa' ...**

Here, the suggestion is if we sing songs of life, there should be then no hankering after life-killing desires and efforts; again the poet's spirituality lies in humanity, and man's religion in his '*Kritakarma*'. The poem 'Last Will' can be seen as his consolation for us as well as a clarion call :

**Let mind be set
only on the mystery beyond death!**

.....

**Let refinement of worship be
in the splendour of knowledge ...**

Here, he gives more emphasis on 'mind' which controls all body-organs, and on 'knowledge', the purest of all things in the world as we find in *The Gita*.

To poet Mahendra Bhatnagar 'Love' is an elixir, an '*élan vital*'. It is also a connecting link between the earthly and the cosmic existence :

**Indeed attached to the earth though we are
Yet the bond of love for the moon and stars
Is unbreakable as ever, ...**

(Vision)

For him, 'Love' and 'Beauty' are synonymous, so he concludes :

**In this life
There is nothing,
Nothing indeed
More beautiful than love,
Anywhere!**

**If birth is a blessing
It is because of this,**

Indeed, because of this! ...

(Conclusion)

How boldly he asserts us :

**In dreams and ideals we do indulge,
Yet no less significant is our pledge
To make them real!**

(Vision)

How affectionately he kindles our dead passions :

**So please sing me a song
Fresh and sweet
In a new strain!**

Ask me not

**How many times
Did I fall and rise
On the stream of life, ...**

(Light the Lamps)

In this poem he actually sings a paean of life, so he can utter

:

Yet do I know -

I have drained the cup of poison to the dregs ...

His poem 'Sing' is an ode to 'Life'. How inspiring and charming these lines are :

**Sing, so that life a lyric became!
Sing, so that each particle a friend became!
Sing, so that defeat victory became!
Sing, so that suffering a music became! ...**

And he completes it by saying :

**On the time-tablet is inscribed
'Life is invincible'! ..**

(Indomitable)

And he supports his conviction that this is not a mere impossibility :

**If
In country mine
Persons as Gandhi and Nehru
Had not taken birth
Then -
Clamps of beastliness
Round our hands and feet
Would have been fastened! ..**

(Or Else)

'Gandhi' and 'Nehru' became the symbols of values as well as ideals. And this sounds much when at the next moment he reminds us the most vital truth :

**None is for you
None is for anybody
The world utterly selfish is! ...**

(Epitaph)

He gives a boost to our courage and convictions that are lying dormant at this moment :

**A tide of laughter knocks,
Dear! the love is still alive with all its
aspirations ...**

(Light the Lamps)

He reminds us that one should free one's mind first from all inhibitions to do this great job :

**Beauty of the universe is nobody's pown!
No grievance have I against you today! ..**

(No Grievance)

The poet finds 'Love' as the real blessing gifted by God to man :

**A glamorous marriage life is
For that man having love as God's gift,
Lucky is he; for him alone there is
Spring in nature; rains in the world! ...**

(The Blessedness of Man)

He defines the term 'heroism' in 'The Man' :

**Hero is he, who hasn't shed a tear
And has treasured the anguish in the heart! ...**

Here the suggestion is if we cannot overcome our personal grief and sorrow, how can we understand other's agony and bring joy to them. So he asks 'Love' first :

**O giver of life,
Give me love,
If you have given me thirst
Give me nectar to drink ...**

(Through the Unwanted Moments)

and then says :

**For I have witnessed
The picture of living truth,
A picture of the world and of life
Full of pain and agony restless!
Deep sorrow of some innocent soul,
In torrents of tears,
Pours down on earth!
Darkness prevails so dense all around,
That Aurora in displeasure carries ...**

(Betrayal)

With a Shelleyan enthusiasm he can inspire us :

**To win over the damsel of the dawn
The myriad songs I would sing forth.
And to dispel the darkness,
I would bedeck life with light!
Until the blooming love pervades the entire universe ..**

(Betrayal)

Like a true humanist he gives us a firm as well as an inspiring voice to uplift 'peace' and 'humanity' :

**No matter how vigorous
The drum-beat of war may be
We shall hold fast
The banner of peace aloft!
And the suppression of the voice of peace
We shall not allow! ..**

(With Flags of Peace)

He who as a great poet has far-sightedness, can utter such words of hope :

**Opposite current any would dash against it
But only to reel and retreat in utter defeat!**

(It Won't Collapse)

Though the poet sees darkness all around, yet he hopes for a dawn :

**Yet I live
On the bed of fire;
Yet I live
Holding a mountain on my head!
Yes, I live in the manner of Siva
Drinking poison unto the neck ...**

(Life)

For he believes in 'Karmayoga', and so he can challenge 'Destiny' with such a heroic utterance :

**O Winged steeds of Destiny!
Holding thy reins
With confidence
And with firm hands,
We will pull them
To give ye direction,**

Every time!

.....

**Bathed in sweat
We will wash
Thy ominous lines,
And singing sweet the inspiring music
Of hard work,
We will break through,
Thy citadels
Of distress and destruction! ...**

(O Winged Steeds of Destiny)

That is why he accepts :
**O bestower of benedictions!
The life-giver
The poisonous gift
That you have given me
I accept ...**

(I Accept)

And through this acceptance he realises the Great Soul within himself :

**In the solitude of this darksome night -
Who has poured
Into my poisonous, bitter self
The sweet words of great consolation -
Sounding like a charming musical note,
Coming from a distance,
Springing a pleasant surprise?**

.....

**Oh, who is it
That stirs my consciousness
To mitigate my suffering ? ...**

(Who Are You)

At the same time he reminds us that he has not a magic wand but, :

**Lots of Love - love
That I have treasured all my life -
To each of those
Who are distressed
Either by Fate or the ways of the world! ...**

(Gift of a Lively Faith)

Mahendra Bhatnagar can be rightly called a poet of the masses, and of 'new hopes' and 'a lively faith' when he says :

**O ye,
The downtrodden, distressed, dejected ones!
I welcome you
With the fragrant gleeful bouquets
Of new hopes and a lively faith! ..**

(Gift of a Lively Faith)

As he is a poet of the masses, he cannot indulge only in spirituality :

**O my lovely love!
When the flowers are fading
And the world looks like a widow,
what meaning could there be
In the beauty-aids, or
The jingling of the ankle-bells?
Pray, oh, Pray
That the buds may blossom
And the branches quiver with love! ..**

(A Submission)

He welcomes the ordinary people who do marvel in their ordinary existence :

**In desolate forests,
A warm welcome
To the blooming flowers
Raining on beds of thorns,
Flowers-mute in agony! ...**

(Contradictory)

'Desolate forests' suggest an ordinary place far away from the din and bustle of the pompous show of vain pride and glory of modern city life. That is why the poet reminds :

**In this city
of glorious buildings
.....
Who is known to you
.....
Someone with whom you can share**

The secrets of the heart!

.....

Is someone

Who can be called your own! ...

(Lonely)

How perfectly he depicts the socio-political scenario :

Although

Every night I go to bed

After having heard the news

That nothing unpleasant happened anywhere,

There is tension

But everything is in control! ...

(To The Hawker)

To him the real meaning of 'suicide' is :

We ourselves

Have abandoned the shape of a man

And have put on animal hides,

We growl!

And snatch away the lives

of our own descendants! ...

(Suicide)

He helps us saying :

If life is pain,

Then bear its pangs

We must!

If life is a secret,

then remain silent

We must

If there is no harbour

Then row on

We must! ...

(Helpless)

He can offer the best humanistic call :

Compel not

Man

So much that

Life to him

Became

A sharp pricking

Ever oozing

Gangrene! ...

(Insistence)

We again hear the message of indomitable courage :

Because the fact is this -

That in each calamity of his

All alone has lived Man! ...

(Self-Experience)

And these lines echo the content of Rabindra Nath Tagore's song 'yadi tor dak sune keo na aase, tabe ekla cholore' (if nobody comes forward at your call, then alone go on ahead) .

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar liberates 'woman' :

.... **Frailty is not thy name,**

.... **Your hands are now free from chains;**

.... **Prison social or personal confines you not,**

.... **I speak not as your lord, but as a friend;**

I simply wish to bind you

With bonds silken of eternal love ...

(Woman Reborn)

'To The Condemned Woman' is an excellent poem, where he guards well the honour of the woman-kind :

O fallen woman

Condemned by the world

Come!

Me would give you cinnabar

To wish you blessedness!

O you,

Who have only known

Deep sighs and wailings

Me would bless your voice

With sweet melodies!

Here the last two lines have so many implications! The suggestion is that 'sighs and wailings' will be turned into 'sweet melodies' only then when there will be some self-sufficiency through intuitions, and when a poet can do that job through his

poetry, then what honour and blessedness can be greater than this!
The poet knows well that anyone can be illumined by such sparkling
lines :

**.... That lightning flashes not in the blaze of noon!
.... That the breaths of the undaunted
are wasted not - no, never! ...**

(We Know It Well)

His 'Many A Man' is an extraordinary poem where he
perfectly

draws a line between the progressives and the traditionalists :

**A new world has emerged though,
Some take it still to be an evil world;
Scared of their own shadows,
They are caught in illusions wild! ...**

Whatever poet Mahendra Bhatnagar says has a force and
vigour due to his deeper understanding of life and the world around
it. That is why a simple word 'Duty' gets a special definition as
well as dimension, and it has become poetry because of its
uniqueness of presentation and communication :

**... To love
This life, this world
Is what a man must do! ...**

(Duty)

How finely he points at the symbols of our unlimited desires

:

**How ugly
Is the reality
Of these sky-kissing
Rainbow-rimmed
Buildings
Is known to us!**

(Recognition)

How finely he depicts our 'pitiable world' :

**Thus passes away life
With just
Pitiable world of
even routine, monotony!
Rare -**

**Music cadence
Sounds thrilling
Joy fragrant
Love rainbow-like! ...**

(Recognise You Can't)

'Gouraiya' is not so simple a poem that narrates the pitiable
condition of a bird. It symbolises what is good in our life, that
remains picturesque in our superficial life. Like a mystic poet he
finds out :

**Only a thin line
Lies between laughter
And tears! ..**

(Climax)

He can depict the hellish modern human life through a fine
imagery :

**Terror fills the skies,
Hot are the winds,
With sulphur, with venom,
But up to the destination
Braving storms
ceaselessly
We have to move! ...**

(To Live)

In this social context the poem 'Birthday' bears a special
significance :

**Even / in the storm,
The lamp
Kept burning ...**

Herein lies the aesthetic beauty of his poems. Like a true
poet he laments for the cause of poetry that has been lost in this
dull and dreary civilized modern life :

**It
Has never happened before -
That words
Have been so crippled,
Words with feet,
Words that walk and run,
Not one,
But so many of them!**

....

**Words,
Pregnant with
The condensed pain
of an entire life
Have become So bare,
Have been lost so completely
In the air**

(It Has Never Happened Before)

To him poetry is :

**Wedding man
With man
turning direction
Of brewing hurricanes
Of cruel violent passions,
Going forward
To break their horrific
Blind fury and onrush
Poetry powerful
Is hymn, prayer it is! ...**

(A Poem-Prayer)

And also like a true poet he awakens the fearful heart that does not know its exact condition :

**Who is it
That stops you
From telling the truth?**

.....

**Who keeps in check
Your consciousness?
Who has chained
Your inspirations?**

(Unfettered Voice)

With an encouraging voice :

**Let the voice be free,
Unbound!
Speak -
This stiffness will end
And each word
Will become radiant! ...**

(Unfettered Voice)

The poet gives a definition of the true valiant worker :

It is we who make life worth living ...

(The Valiant Workers)

He reminds us that he can wish and enjoy :

**Now is the time
To bathe to the full
In the stream of light,
To get into the radiant waterfall of truth
And bathe for the rest of my life! ...**

(Desired)

For he has already experienced :

**I have roved so much
In the murkiness of clouds,
I have wandered endlessly
In the darkness of my mind! ...**

(Desired)

This poet can exclaim :

**Has the day been victorious,
On my living from moment to moment
Lives day,
My pace gives meaning
To the immortal time,
I am / the unconquered, ceaseless battle,
Before me bows
Each mountain-obstacle**

Each approaching moment

Is welcome! ...

(Life)

Once again, he makes us remember that we, the humans are the sons of the 'Amrita' (nectar) :

**Its representative we are,
The best and the fittest,
We the destroyers of darkness
We the guides to light! ...**

(Radiance)

**He again extends his praise for Man :
Indomitable are they
Wonderful bend they have! ...**

(Indomitable)

He suggests that while there is a winter in the mind and the world around it, it is the best time for the reunion of the soul and the body :

**At such a time, why are you silent,
Do share a secret with me!
Silently meet the earth and the sky,
At such a moment be with me,
Or else, the cold body will shiver!**

(Winter)

He symbolises that - blessed moment, the moment of spiritual attainment :

**Who knows when
You kept a bunch
of entwined flowers
In my room
And left! ...**

(Symbol)

The poet gets alarmed in fear of losing that Invisible, that 'Arupa' (who has no form) :

**You are the sparrow
of my courtyard
You will fly away!
Now my house rings
With sweet harmony,
The nectar of love rains
From all sides,
I fear
Who knows when
You will leave and be lost! ...**

(You)

Here 'courtyard' and 'house' suggest the 'mind' and the 'body' respectively. So Mahendra Bhatnagar is not only an avant-grade Indian poet, but a great contributor to the enrichment of World Poetry. Lastly, I want to express my gratitude to the translators of his poems. If they did not translate his poems, I could not present a glimpse of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's richness of thought to the French readers. ●

DR. MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR : THE POET

– Mr. Kedar Nath Sharma

Even at 77 Mahendra Bhatnagar is an avid Hindi writer. He was not even 18 when his first poem was published in March, 1944 in 'Vishal Bharat', a literary monthly magazine of repute, published from Calcutta. Since then he has published seventeen collections of poems, several other books including those on literary criticism. His poems have been translated not only in Indian languages such as Tamil, Malayalam, Kannad, Telugu, Marathi, Gujrati, Bengali, Oriya, Manipuri but also in foreign languages including English, Czech and French.

SIMPLE AND STRAIGHT FORWARD

Poetry is Dr. Bhatnagar's first love. There are solid grounds for the popularity of his poetry. He is not cryptic or esoteric. Generally speaking, he is simple and straight-forward. For example, his poem 'DUTY' 'धर्म' reads :

प्यार करना
ज़िन्दगी से : जगत से
आदमी का धर्म है!

प्यार करना
मानवों से
मूक पशुओं पक्षियों जल-जन्तुओं से
वन-लताओं से / दुर्मों से
आदमी का धर्म है!

प्यार करना
कलियों और फूलों से
विविध रंगों सजी-सँवरी तितलियों से
आदमी का धर्म है!

**To love
This life, this world
Is what a man must do!**

**To love
People,**

**mute animals, birds, sea-creatures,
The forest creepers, / The trees,
is what a man must do!**

**To love
the buds and the blooms,
the myriad hued butterflies
is what a man must do!**

Again in 'LIFE' 'जीवन' he says :

मेरा हाथ पकड़ उठता है दिन,
मेरे कंधों पर चढ़ बढ़ता है दिन,
मेरे मन से अभिनव रचना करता है दिन,
लड़ मेरे बल पर जीता है दिन,
क्षण-क्षण मेरे जीने पर
जीता है दिन,
मैं ही हूँ अविजित अविराम समर,
मेरे सम्मुख हर पर्वत-बाधा नत है!

**Holding my hand
Rises the day,
Riding on my shoulders
Grows the day,
Fighting on my strength
Has the day been victorious,
On my living from moment to moment
Lives the day,
I am
The unconquered, ceaseless battle,
Before me bows
Each mountain-obstacle!**²

What does he mean? The poem reveals his self-confidence and not ego. He has personified Day as a living being which cannot move independently. It needs the support of the poet for its rising and mobility. In other words it is not the day a unit of indivisible Time which moulds Mahendra Bhatnagar's life, on the contrary it is he who manipulates Time to dance to his tunes. To be precise, he catches time by its forelock. This poem is a beacon for those who believe in destiny and feel helpless in life.

Contrast it with what he says in another (earlier) poem - 'LIFE' 'जीवन : एक अनुभूति' :

पर, जी रहा हूँ
आग पर शैया बिछाए!
पर, जी रहा हूँ
शीश पर पर्वत उठाए!
पर, जी रहा हूँ
कटु हलाहल, कंठ का गहना बनाए!
ज़िन्दगी में बस
जटिलता ही जटिलता है
सरलता कुछ नहीं!

**Yet I live
On the bed of fire,
Yet I live
Holding a mountain on my head!
Yes, I live in the manner of Siva
Drinking poison unto the neck!
Life is intricate, complex too
It's not so easy, not that easy!**³

It is surprising that the poet of 'LIFE' in 1998-2000 was so pessimistic in 1959 when (earlier poem) 'LIFE' was published. Over forty years ago life was a burden for him as heavy as a mountain but by the turn of the century his attitude to life had changed. Instead of the Day (*Din* or time) being carried by him, he was being led by Time. What a transcendence!

FEELS FOR THE DOWN TRODDEN

Dr. Bhatnagar's poems present kaleidoscopic spectacle in the rich variety of their themes. A poet writes about the age he lives in. He cannot be an anachronism. So like his contemporaries Mahendra Bhatnagar has been writing about the down-trodden. His poem 'THE DAWN'⁴ 'नयी सुबह' (1951) and 'I APPEAL'⁵ 'मैं कहता हूँ' (1951) are the finest examples of how he wants to infuse valour and courage in the minds of the oppressed. But in 'THE TREMOR OF TRAMPLING FEET' 'मज़लूम' he seems to be echoing the Marxist views when he says :

शोषक दुर्गो की दढ़ दीवारें,
तड़कीं केवल कंपन के मारे,
सबने समझा -
भूडोल उठा है दुर्दम

पर, वे तो थे मजलूमों के कूच कदम!
When the thick walls of the exploiters' citadels
Cracked with the reverberating sounds
Every one thought -
There rocked the earthquake
But lo! That was the tremor of the
trampling feet,
Of the down-trodden!'⁶

The trampling feet of the down-trodden were heard only in the communist countries and not in India. In our country there has never been such a revolution. There was only a freedom movement against the British but never against the countless Rajas who oppressed the masses before independence to please the British rulers. It is the Hindu religion that has made people passive relying completely on the pre-ordained destiny due to their 'karmas' (deeds) and not to be aggressive, to become the architects of their future. The present day Indian politicians make the masses rebel to build temples but not for building the nation. Anyhow the poet has expressed his feelings, and the poet's feelings may or may not rouse the men to act. Mahendra Bhatnagar does feel for the poor.

HUMAN RIGHTS

He speaks strongly against the lip service in the name of human rights or the emancipation of the poor in the poem 'STOP IT' 'बंद करो!' as under :

भूखों-नंगों दुखियारों की,
मानव-अधिकारों की,
आवाज़ नहीं है यह!
भाई-चारे का सच्चा भाव नहीं है यह!
तूफ़ानी सागर में उलझे मानव की
उद्धारक नाव नहीं है यह!
This is not the voice
Of the down-trodden; the starving and the naked,
Nor is it the voice of the human rights!
This is not the voice of amity and accord.
This is not the rescue-boat of the struggling man
Who is caught in the tempest-torn sea!'⁷

But his socialistic views are very well illustrated poeti-

cally in 'REAP THE PADDY' 'काटो धान!' :

श्रमिक तेरे पसीने से सिँचे
प्रति पेड़ की हर डाल में
सित, लाल, पीले फूल!
जीने के लिए देती तुम्हें
ओ! आज भू माता सहज वरदान!
The dust drenched in sweat of labour,
Shot up in the bowers and on boughs
Blossoms white, red and yellow
The gracious Mother Earth
Blesses you with a life long and happy!'⁸

Mahendra Bhatnagar speaks for the emancipation of woman too, in 'WOMAN REBORN' 'नयी नारी' :

तुम नहीं कोई पुरुष की ज़र-खरीदी चीज़ हो,
तुम नहीं आत्मा-विहीना सेविका,
मस्तिष्क-हीना सेविका,
गुड़िया हृदय-हीना,
नहीं हो तुम वही युग-युग पुरानी
पैर की जूती किसी की!
जग के करोड़ों आज युवकों की तरफ़ से
कह रहा हूँ मैं -
'तुम्हारा 'प्रभु' नहीं हूँ,
हाँ, सखा हूँ!
और तुमको सिर्फ़ अपने
प्यार के सुकुमार बंधन में
हमेशा बाँध रखना चाहता हूँ!
You aren't a purse-purchased commodity of man,
Nor are you the soulless slave girl,
The brainless hand-maid and the lifeless doll.
No longer are you the same age-old
Down-trodden footwear of man.
On behalf of the youths millions of the world
I speak, not as your lord, but as a friend;
I simply wish to bind you
With bonds silken of eternal love!'⁹

LIFE AND DEATH

The poet's attitude towards life and death is bound in one volume titled 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception' translated into

English by Dr. D.C. Chambial, the editor of 'Poetcrit'. Indian authors, nay - authors from anywhere in the world - cannot have better views about life and death than what have been enunciated by ancient Indian seers in Hindu scriptures. These rishis have investigated all aspects of life and death. They have delineated their experiences in immortal books without ever thinking of even appending their own names to the works created by them. But we the present day Indian authors always endeavour to get recognized, eulogized, awarded, applauded and immortalized. See how Mahendra Bhatnagar declares his death in the poem 'A PROCLAMATION' 'चोषणा' :

दुनिया वालों से कह दो
अब महेंद्र भटनागर सोता है!
चिर-निद्रा में सोता है!

Tell the world -

Now Mahendra Bhatnagar sleeps!

Sleeps in an eternal sleep.¹⁰

There can be two interpretations of this proclamation. First, it shows that the poet is ready for the inevitable. What cannot be avoided must be welcomed without regret as advised by *Lord Krishna* in the *Gita*. The second at an acute angle shows the importance of Mahendra Bhatnagar leaving this world with fanfare reminiscent of Alexander the Great bidding adieu to the world with outstretched empty hands :

जीवन जो अपना है,
उस पर भी अपना अधिकार नहीं,
घर-धन जो अपना है
उसमें भी, सचमुच कोई सार नहीं!
उसके तुम दावेदार नहीं!
जाता हूँ, दुनिया से जाता हूँ!
सुन्दर घर, सुन्दर दुनिया से जाता हूँ!
सदा ... सदा को जाता हूँ!

**Life that is one's own,
one has no right over it too,
hearth-wealth that is one's own
That too, in fact has no essence
You've no claim over that!**

I go, I go from this world!

I go from this lovely home, lovely world!

I go for good for good

I go!¹⁰

Mahendra Bhatnagar gives a first importance to death. For him life is a corollary of death as is evident from the very title of the book- 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception'. According to him man dies to be born but is not born to die. Life is beautiful because death is inevitable. Life is significant because of death. Man values love because he remembers death. But Mahendra Bhatnagar seems to be contradicting himself in what he says in one poem and in the other. He seems to be obsessed with death. He eulogizes it and he deplors it. His attitude to it depends upon the mood of the moment when he pens down a particular poem. His views about death undergo changes with the passage of time like the patterns in a kaleidoscope changing with every jerk.

However, the poem 'THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE' begins :

बहिर्गति - भौतिक सपन्दन;

अन्तर-गति - जीवन!

External motion - Physical vibration,

Internal motion - Life.¹¹

This means that external motion is physical vibration and internal motion is life. This, I feel, is nothing but extravagance of language unless he is referring to macrocosm and microcosm but that too would be a far-fetched interpretation. However, his thought process is off beat and not traditional. If all the poems in this volume are analyzed one by one, a whole new book will have to be written. Let it be a topic for the research students.

A REALIST

His poem 'BETRAYAL' 'छलना' shows that Mahendra Bhatnagar is a realist who does not live in the world of imagination or in any dreamland. The poem opens abruptly as is his wont :

आज सपनों की नहीं मैं बात करता हूँ!

चौद-सी तुमको समझ कर

अब न रह-रह कर

विरह में आह भरता हूँ!
 कि मैंने आज जीवित सत्य की तसवीर देखी है,
 जगत की, ज़िन्दगी की
 एक व्याकुल दर्द की तसवीर देखी है!
**No more do I indulge in dreams now
 Nor do I sigh, off and on, in separation,
 Believing you as fascinating as the Moon.
 For I have witnessed
 The picture of the world and of life
 Full of pain and agony restless!**¹²

His poetry is a mass of random reflections delineating his thoughts and feelings at any given moment. So the momentary thoughts can be pessimistic or optimistic as the occasions propel him. His wishful thinking is quite urging as is evident from the poem 'LIGHT'.¹³ 'आलोक' The poem 'THE FUTURE'¹⁴ 'भविष्यत्' starts on a note of hopelessness but ends with twinkling hope. In 'LIFE TODAY'¹⁵ 'आज की ज़िन्दगी' he depicts the miserable condition of life today. In 'FAR ACROSS THE FIELDS' 'दूर खेतों पार' civilization is depicted as under :

नाशकारी गाज सिर पर टूट
 मानव दीन,
 सभ्यता का अर्थ हिंसा-लूट
 ममता हीन,
 खो गया तम के विजन में प्रात!
 शीत की काली भयावह रात!

**The disastrous lightning is crashing
 On the poor humanity,
 Civilization is synonym of violence and loot -
 Devoid of affection all;
 Dawn is lost in desolate darkness!
 The dark and dreadful night of the winter!**¹⁶

He has depicted two pictures of Indian middle class as visualized by him in the fifties. Both the poems present pitiable conditions of the subjects chosen by him.

LOVE

Spontaneous upsurge of love, on first meeting the beloved, is delineated by Mahendra Bhatnagar in the poem 'MEETING'

'संसर्ग' like any novice lover :

जब से हुई पहचान -
 मूक अधरों पर / अयास
 बिछल रहे कल गान!
 देखा / एकाग्र पहली बार -
 बढ़ गया विश्वास
 मन पंख पसार
 छूना चाहता आकाश!

**Since we knew each other - / Involuntarily,
 Sweet songs began to flow
 From my mute lips.
 The first time / I saw you,
 My eyes were lost in you.
 Hope soared
 The heart spread wings
 And wished to touch the sky.**¹⁷

'TOUCH'¹⁸ 'स्पर्श' also shows how the poet undergoes transformation with the very touch of the beloved. While waiting for the beloved in the poem 'FAILED'¹⁹ 'विफल', his emotions rising like the waves fell silent suddenly when the beloved failed to turn up. His feelings in these three poems seem pulsating with the words as they do in the poet's heart. This is the unique quality of Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry of love. There is no lowly depiction of love or sex in his poetry. The whole family consisting of the young and the old can read his love poems without an iota of compunction.

WISHFUL THINKER

In 1955 Mahendra Bhatnagar was expecting miracles from his pen (his poetic acumen) when he wrote the poem 'TO MY PEN'.²⁰ 'लेखनी से -' In 1956 when America was devising hydrogen bomb, young Mahendra had written the poem 'DESTRUCTION PLAY'.²¹ 'विनाश लीला' These days when America is staging her dance of destruction in Iraq, his poem seems to have become topical. In the poem 'FAITH'²² 'आस्था' he was dreaming of green revolution, which has already become a reality. He thinks that dreams are the eternal friends of man and expresses his thoughts in the poem 'MAN AND DREAM'.²³ 'आदमी और स्वप्न' All these poems are the creation of his head (Thinking) and not his heart. They seem to

be laboured and not spontaneous.

SPONTANEOUS

His spontaneity becomes evident when one reads 'LIFE'¹³ 'जीवन' immediately after the above poems. This poem is the specimen of Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry in general. 'NIGHT SHALL PASS AWAY'²⁴ 'रात बीतेगी' rouses the feelings of perpetual life struggle, which will ultimately be overcome. But 'AGAIN AFTER AGES'²⁵ 'युगों के बाद फिर' creates many confusing images. After the passage of many ages 'You' (addressed to a female) is suddenly seen sleeping on the berth. Is it a berth in a railway compartment? The poet and she are both travelling together. Is berth the present life span? And who is 'You'? The 'Ages' of the first line becomes 'Days' in the penultimate line of the poem. Here the poet seems to be squeezing time into a capsule but what he wants to say, remains un-explained, except that a ray of hope seems to be shining in the immediate future : the whole poem may mean nothing but it certainly is spontaneous.

NATURE

He treats nature in his own particular way. The first four lines of the poem 'THE DUSK' 'साँझ' read :

उस ऊँचे टीले पर
कुछ सहमी-सी
काली, नंगी, अनगढ़ चट्टान पड़ी है,
सहमी-सी -
शायद, उस पर अब कोई आकर लेटेगा!
कोई?
हाँ, हो सकता है -
चाँद-सितारों का प्रेमी हो,
कवि हो,
प्रिय से बिछुड़ा हो,
या कि जगत से रूठा हो!

On that hillock -
Hesitatingly sprawls a massy stone,
Someone may now come
To lie on it.
Someone - yes,
May be a lover of heavenly bodies,

May be a poet,

Or, a deserted lover,

Or, someone fretted with the world!²⁶

For Mahendra Bhatnagar even a rock has feelings as a living being. The rock is not only naked (without any cover) but is also timid as if harassed. Science today has proved that even a stone has a nucleus, which continues working all the time and with the passage of time changes its very form. So scientifically also Mahendra Bhatnagar does not sound hyperbolic but so far as Hindu philosophy goes he is absolutely right. Hindus find God inhabiting every thing including stones, which are even worshipped.

For him even Moon in the poem 'THE BEAUTY OF THE SLEEPING MOON'²⁷ 'चाँद सोता है!' has new feelings, imaginations and desires. The poem 'TO THE MOON'²⁸ 'चाँद से' and 'MOON LIGHT'²⁹ 'ज्योत्स्ना' are beautifully imbued with multiple meanings. The poem 'A PAIR'³⁰ in the collection 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception' presents an excellent example of poetic artistry of Mahendra Bhatnagar. Using the imagery of a desert, he interweaves the texture of a human being at his fag end with what the landscape of the desert appears to him. This poem is a mixture of hope and despair juxtaposing in his mind. Many of his poems point out a perpetual feud between optimism and pessimism raging in his mind. Not only this poem but many others also indicate that the objects of nature are closely knit with the vicissitudes of life. This attribute of his poetry is unique and makes him stand out distinct from many biggies of Hindi literature.

YOUTH

Mahendra Bhatnagar's attitude towards youth is peculiar. Youth for him is perpetual. In the poem 'YOUTH' 'जवानी' he says :

समय तो गुज़रता चला जायगा
पर, जवानी कभी भी मिटेगी नहीं!
करोड़ों युगों से जवानी का दरिया
हज़ारों रुकावट मिटा कर
निरन्तर बहा है व बहता रहेगा!
करोड़ों युगों से जवानी का सरगम

नयी ज़िन्दगी का नया गीत
 गाता रहा है व गाता रहेगा!
Time shall pass away
But youth shall endure!
From time immemorial the current of youth
Washing aside obstacles galore,
Has constantly flowed on!
From time immemorial the orchestra of youth
Has been playing on
And shall ever play
The new melody of resurgent life!³¹
 In 'SUFFERING' 'व्यथा' he says :
 तुम नये युग के तरुण हो,
 है नहीं देता तुम्हें शोभा बहाना अश्रु
 प्रिय की याद में या बेवफ़ाई में!
Youth you are of the upcoming age,
Shedding tears
In remembrance of the beloved,
Or for her betrayal
Behoves you not!³²

HIS STYLE

The word style is a comprehensive term when one has to talk about a poet or a writer. Here its scope is limited to Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry only. A poet writes about the experiences of his life. While trying to convey these experiences, Jacob Korg, in 'AN INTRODUCTION TO POETRY', says "a person seeks the most expressive words, but he is also likely to go beyond words, and to resort to exclamations, intonations, and comparisons. Poetry is language of this sort. Its natural subject-matter is the kind of experience that ordinary language cannot communicate. Poetry works at the limits of knowledge. seeking to express the inexpressible." See how Mahendra Bhatnagar expresses love in the poem 'JUST ONCE' 'बस, एक बार ..!':

स्नेह-तरलित दो नयन
 मुझको देख लें
 बस,
 एक बार!

Love lorn two eyes
Should see me
Just
Once!³³

The poet seems to be already talking to some one very impatiently. The reader feels as if the poet is in the middle of a conversation and is pouring out his heart.

The gripping beauty of language continues in poem after poem. In 'TOUCH STONE' 'निकष' he starts :

किसी मधु-गंधिका के
 प्यार की ऊष्मा-किरण
 मुझको छुए तो -
 मोम हूँ!
 किसी मुग्धा चकोरी के
 अबोध अधीर भटके दो नयन
 मुझ पर पड़ें तो -
 सोम हूँ!
Were some sweet-scented
Warm-ray of love
To touch me -
Wax I am!
Were some 'Mugdha'³⁴ **Chakor!**³⁵
Innocent impatient stray eyes two
Glanced me -
Moon I am!³⁶

The young poet is not in love but is expecting some one to fall in love with him. The delicacy of his words is enchanting. The expression 'Wax I am' points out that he is ready to melt like wax should some one sweet and passionate just touch him. If John Keats a romantic poet of England, were to be born again, he would have to take a few tips from Mahendra Bhatnagar. The paraphernalia employed by a poet in crafting his poetry is very large. It includes diction, similes, metaphors, alliteration, consonance, rhythm, rhyme, images, symbols, and a few other poetic devices.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's diction is mostly stark. At times, he is very parsimonious in the use of words. His brevity in expression is frugal to the extent of being telegraphic. His poems

such as 'CONCLUSION'³⁷ 'निष्कर्ष' , 'A PUZZLE'³⁸ 'पहेली' , 'LIFE-DEATH'³⁹ 'जन्म-मृत्यु' etc. contain briefest of expressions. In 'THE OPPOSITE'⁴⁰ 'विलोम' he has made bare statements without the use of even verbs and he has expressed himself explicitly. Still he feels that his words have become ineffective in the poem 'IT HAS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE'. 'अभूतपूर्व' Even the English translation of the second stanza of his poem would be sufficient to illustrate the point :

ऐसा
कभी हुआ नहीं -
निरर्थक हो गये हों शब्द,
विविध भंगिमाओं वाले
विविध अर्थ-गर्भी शब्द,
ऐसे खोखले हो गये हों
बेअसर / चिन्हधर!

It

Has never happened before -
That words
Of myriad expressions,
Of various intents
Have become hollow,
Ineffective,
Mere signs!⁴¹

The use of monosyllables by him enhances the flow of his poetry, as in the poem 'EXUBERANCE' 'उमंग' he repeats words :

बार - बार / द्वार थपथपा रहा
समय अ-समय
किस कदर / उतावला पवन!
दूर - पास / खेत हाट चौक में
अधीर / जान-बूझ
भीग-भीग
थरथरा रहा / प्रिया बदन!⁴²

This magic of monosyllables mesmerizes the reader by creating a word-picture of an atmosphere made vivid by the quivering bodies of the beautiful women (In parenthesis I must say that I have used the word beautiful women disagreeing totally with the translator Ravinandan Sinha who has substituted Mahendra

Bhatnagar's '*priya*' with the word 'beloved.' I have done it because far and near, in the fields, market places and at cross roads only one beloved cannot be present. There are several beautiful and lovable women who are enjoying by deliberately wetting themselves in the drizzle.) All the three stanzas of this poem end with the rhyming words adding to the fast flow and resonance of the poem.

By repeating the same word the poet enhances the meanings and the beauty of his poems. A few examples are :

बिखर-बिखर in 'CONTEMPLATION'⁴³

रह-रह - पग-पग in 'THE TRUTH'⁴⁴

सदा-सदा in 'FORMS OF DEATH'⁴⁵

नहीं-नहीं - अवश्य-अवश्य in 'CONCLUSION'.³⁷

But Mahendra Bhatnagar's diction is not always simple. He uses several Sanskritized words which are not easy to understand; as in the poems :

'आभार' में in 'GRATITUDE'⁴⁶

काम्य (desired)

साम्य (semblance)

सौकर्य (efficiency)

'निरुद्धग्न' में in 'FREE FROM WORRY'⁴⁷

निर्विषय मानस (pleasure less heart)

'चिन्तन' में (contemplation)

प्रहेलिका (a Puzzle)

'जन्म-मृत्यु' में in 'Life-Death'

महानिधान (completely invisible)

RHYME

Although his poems are in free verse, he beautifies them in several ways. He uses rhyme too. Every stanza of the poem 'DUTY'¹ 'धर्म' ends with 'धर्म है' and every stanza of the poem 'RECOGNITION'⁴⁸ 'पहचान' ends with 'हमें मालूम है'. The poem 'CLIMAX' 'चरम-बिन्दु' has 'न होने में' ending his three stanzas and it is rhymed with 'रोने में'. The poem 'BUILDING'⁵⁰ 'भवन' contains : परकोटा-छोटा, उपवन-आँगन, अंकन-दर्पण

In the poem 'BIRTHDAY'⁵¹ 'जन्म-दिन' stanzas end with : हुआ, जिया, छुआ, दिया।

In short Mahendra Bhatnagar uses his language to create varied effects.

METAPHORS

In 'LIFE-DEATH'³⁹ 'जन्म-मृत्यु' he has used the metaphor 'मृत्यु – अटूट डोर है!' 'मृत्यु – प्रतीप छोर है!'। In 'PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE'⁴¹ 'जीवन-दर्शन' he calls बहिर्गति – भौतिक स्पन्दन और अन्तर्गति – जीवन।

EXTENDED METAPHORS

The poem 'A PAIR'³⁰ 'युग्म' presents an extended metaphor. In this poem life is compared to a desert. Many of his poems are full of such metaphors.

SIMILES

Old age is like the dying lamp flame बुझती दीपक लौ-सी। (In 'A PAIR'³⁰ 'युग्म')

In 'RECOGNITION' 'पहचान'

इन अट्टालिकाओं का

गगन-चुम्बी

कला-कृत

इंद्र धनुषी स्वप्न-सा

अस्तित्व कितना धिनौना है

हमें मालूम है!

In 'BUILDING'⁵⁰ 'भवन'

The walls of the building are compared to the walls of a well कुँए की दीवारों जैसा ऊँचा परकोटा!

MELODY OF HIS POETRY

Mahendra Bhatnagar can be quite melodious when he chooses to be so. The poem 'THE SPLENDOUR OF THE EARTH'⁵² 'धूल-श्री' is just one of such rhythmic poems :

सौंफिया हरी-हरी

डाल-डाल आज री भरी!

हज़ार लाख बेशुमार

हिल रहीं कतार-पर-कतार,

पा पवन दुलार-प्यार

सन-सनन् उठी पुकार,

भर नया उभार

री उतर रही सरल युवा परी!

'TO THE MOON'²⁸ 'चौंद से' and 'MOON LIGHT'²⁹ 'ज्योत्स्ना' are other melodious poems written by him during his early poetic career.

CONCLUSION

The above exercise of the present author in appraising Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry has been vestigial, following the very rudiments of the job. Writing about any literary work without appropriate illustrations would be a futile effort leaving the inquisitive reader to grope.

Going through five volumes of his original and translated poetry has been a time-consuming but satisfying job. He is a consummate artist, sometimes flambouyant, mostly frugal of words, direct, sweet, sometimes pessimistic, often optimistic. He carries a heart full of feelings pouring out here, there, everywhere. He is very imaginative. He is very thoughtful and thought provoking and sometimes heady, too. The poetry that comes out of his head does not settle down like a piece of lead but makes the reader sit up. He is racy and vibrant. He is melodious. He rarely seems to be hearkening to the past and is unique in many respects.

I have had the privilege of interviewing personally and listening to the poetry of, great Hindi poets like Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Harivanshrai Bachchan and several others. It is for the first time that I have written about a poet Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar without meeting him, simply after a study that has been quite close. Hope the effort has been worthwhile.

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- 2 As above, p 45
- 3 'After The Forty Poems', Tr. Prof. Vareendra Kumar Varma, p 37
- 4 As above, Tr. Dr. Ramsevak Singh Yadav, p 19
- 5 ibid, p 21
- 6 ibid, p 25
- 7 ibid, p 16
- 8 'Forty Poems Of Mahendra Bhatnagar', Tr. Prof. Lakshmi Shankar Sharma, p 16
- 9 ibid, Tr. Mr. Amir Mohammad Khan, p26
- 10 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception', Tr. Dr. D.C.Chambial, p 97-101
- 11 ibid, p 34

12 'Forty Poems...', Tr. Mr. A.M.Khan, p 65
 13 ibid, p 84
 14 ibid, p 82
 15 ibid, Tr. Prof. L.S.Sharma, p 76
 16 ibid, p 74
 17 'Exuberance and other poems', Tr. R.N.Sinha, p 15
 18 ibid, p 17
 19 ibid, p 19
 20 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry', Tr. Dr. H.C.Gupta, p 1
 21 ibid, p 5
 22 ibid, p 9
 23 ibid, p 11
 24 ibid, p 29
 25 ibid, p 33
 26 'After The Forty Poems', Tr. Prof. V.K.Varma, p 67
 27 'Forty Poems...', Tr. Prof. L.S.Sharma, p 40
 28 ibid, Tr. Mr. A.M.Khan, p 48
 29 ibid, p 50
 30 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception', Tr. Dr. D.C.Chambial, p 26
 31 'Forty Poems ...', Tr. Mr. A.M.Khan, p 28
 32 ibid, Tr. Prof. L.S.Sharma, p 32
 33 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar-Samgra' Vol 3, Tr. Mr.Kedar Nath Sharma,
 p 149
 34 Staight-forward youthful girl.
 35 Red-legged partridge. According to the poetic lore, 'chkori' loves the
 moon.
 36 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry', Tr. H.C. Gupta, p 65
 37 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception', Tr. Dr. D.C.Chambial, p
 38 ibid, p 12
 39 ibid, p 22
 40 ibid, p 27
 41 'Exuberance and other poems', Tr. Dr. R.N. Sinha, p 23
 42 ibid, p 1
 43 'Death-Perception : Life-perception', Tr. Dr. D.C.Chambial, p 10
 44 ibid, p 14
 45 ibid, p 18
 46 ibid, p 2
 47 ibid, p 8
 48 'Exuberance and other poems', Tr. Dr. R.N. Sinha, p 8
 49 ibid, p 7
 50 ibid, p 9
 51 ibid, p 13
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Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar
The Poet and His Poetry : A Point of View
 – Dr. H. C. Gupta

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of those Hindi critic-poets that have unfortunately not been given the recognition they deserve. He has published seventeen collections of his poems so far - the first 'Taron Ke Geet' (1949) and latest 'Mrityu-Bodh : Jeevan-Bodh' (2002). His poems occupy three of the six recently published volumes of his total literary output, and have been translated in Indian and foreign languages, viz., Tamil, Telugu, Kannad, Malyalam, Bengali, Assamia, Manipuri, Oriya, Marathi, Gujrati and Czech, French and English. As many as five books of his 260 poems translated in English are available and one more is in the process. He has been the subject of three Ph.D. dissertations. Four full-fledged books have also been written on him, namely (i) '*Kavi Mahendra Bhatnagar : Srajan Aur Mulyankan*' (ed) Dr. Durga Prasad Jhala, (ii) '*Kavi Mahendra Bhatnagar ka Rachna-Sansar*' (ed) Dr. Vinay Mohan Sharma, (iii) '*Samajik Chetna Ke Shilpi : Kavi Mahendra Bhatnagar*' (ed) Dr. Haricharan Sharma, (iv) '*Mahendra Bhatnagar Ki Kavya-Samvedna : Antah-Anushasniya Aakalan*' by Dr. Veerendra Singh. Here I may point out that my evaluative reading of Dr. Bhatnagar is confined to a study of his poems available in their English translations.

My critique of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry (of course, based on the poems translated by me) in the 'Foreword' to my translation collection, is worth quoting in full, as it is the resume of his poetical workmanship in its essence. What I want to add before giving it verbatim is that the more I read his poems the more confirmed I feel in my sentiments vis-a-vis his poetry. The excerpt is —

"I can't control the temptation to record my impressions

in some detail of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry, since quite a number of poems — as many as fifty, fifteen more than I had taken up to translate - have received my close perusal. Confessionally, I would not like to be a critic as such, nor a connoisseur but a reader. I would like to stake that Dr. Bhatnagar - at least to me - is a 'lost leader' or he has appeared to be in the poems covering a long span of his poetic career - 1955 to 2000 ('To My Pen' of this collection was written in 1955 and 'Indomitable' in 1998-2000) : he outgrew the Progressive cast of his early poetry and feel - so it seems to me falling - a prey to some '*fairie queene*', his 'dark lady' - 'la belle dame sans merci' - marauder of his heart, which has resulted in a number of effusive overflows of his powerful feelings [See poems : 'Reaction', 'What the Mystery is', 'Recognise You Can't', 'Night shall Pass Away', ' Again, After Ages', 'Sing', 'Or Else', 'Once and Once Only !' and so on] As an inevitable corollary to this, the down-trodden and the social outcasts have had to beat a retreat to the 'unfair fair of the fair-sex.' And since their fountain-head is the poet's heart and not his head of his poems of the Progressive School, I see his hope in these glowing gems of his poetic art. The history of all literatures bears an eloquent testimony to the fact that in the realm of poetry it is the heart that counts. Almost everywhere those composing their poems primarily with their head and brain have had readership confined to a particular place and period. Only those poems that have served as safety-valve in the pressure-cooker for the creator's agitated heart - have dispelled the glum of the creator's psyche with sparks of throes of poesy, are not timed and dated. Here, it may be pointed out that Prof. Bhatnagar has composed poems in all the three modes - narrative, dramatic and lyrical; the lyrical is his penchant. In this work ['Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry' trans. H.C.Gupta] at least, the number of lyrical poems is considerable. To find a versified utterance to my appraisal, of the poet Bhatnagar I would use for him these lines of Wordsworth's 'To the Skylark' : he is

Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam -

True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home

Speaking comparatively, 'of Home' more though. In his poems of

the Progressive School of Hindi poetry, he has painstakingly monitored his antenna of poetic probe in the thick of life and world. His poetry, to be sure, bears and carries the stamp of sincerity and authenticity.

Parading scholarship and learning, at times, his verse is stiff, like a brocade embroidered in gold. More a work of craftsmanship than inspiration. Here his style is terse and pithy. At places, there are the banal mixed metaphors and ambiguities (which are most marked in titles), and the Persian words galore. These, however, are exceptions that prove the rule which is, in poet Bhatnagar's case, free smooth flow of small simple words of daily use. Fortunately, the number of poems in simple clear diction is larger than that of abstruse ones. By all account, progressive or not, Dr. Bhatnagar is sure-footed in his poetical pursuit. Hieratic and mesianic, he has obeisant devotion to his creations."

Lest the above critical reading should be too general, it would be in the fitness of things to be illustrative. It is a trite truism that even Homer sometimes nods - that purple patches of great poetry even in the case of immortal poets, like oases, are few and far between the dreary deserts of pedestrian versification. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is no exception in this case. Equally true is the platitudinal cliché that when a poet tries to assume the role of a missionary or a preceptor, - in other words, when he is didactic, he composes, at best, verse not poetry. Here his primary aim is not to be emotive and evocative but to be re-formatory and informative. There are poems in which Dr. Bhatnagar is deliberately didactic, informative and propagandistic. In poems like '*Himmat na Haro*', '*Gir nahin sakti*', '*Mau aur Chau ke Nam*', '*Band Karo*', '*Kargil Prayan*', '*Vinash Lila*', '*Naya Bharat*', '*Asia*', '*Badhayen; Chunoti Hain*', and so on. In these poems, the poet has versified commonplace platitudes. In poems of didactic nature, there is one to one relationship between the word and its meaning, whereas in all-time great poetry words have undertones and overtones. Words charged with message and knowledge have a blaze that has a blinding effect.

Dr. Bhatnagar is a committed writer, having conviction of faith

as the primary propelling force of his poetry. His poetry evinces an embedded note of scintillating optimism. Basically, he is a stark and confirmed realist. At times, he is a visionary and at times a comrade-in-arms. 'Youth' for this optimist endures; 'frailty thy name is woman' - is not for this feminist. She is neither a 'chattel' nor the Indian traditional man's 'foot-wear'. His life vision is socialistic and altruistic. He is fully conscious of his responsibility as an unacknowledged legislator of mankind. He is, as it were, wedded to poetic art and public welfare.

Hindi is coming up as an internationally understood language with Indian diaspora. The poems with their translations in different languages are sure to be more widely read. Worthy progressive critic Prof. Prakash Chandra Gupta in the note in 'After The Forty Poems' jacket pithily summarises the contents of Dr. Bhatnagar's poetry : "... Forty Poems includes some of his [Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's] best work. Mahendra writes of freedom struggle, victory of oppressed humanity and its vision of a new world. He writes of the beauty of nature, of love and hate, of joy and sorrow ..." Two things can be safely avouched : one that Dr. Bhatnagar has a poetic sensibility - both in its narrow and wide sense and two, that he writes with gusto and a feeling of joy in his work. Rooted deep into the soil and ambience of his native land, these poems reflect not only the moods of a thoughtful person but also the vicissitudes and fluctuations of a complex age. He has an art of concretising his sensations. Through his poetry, Dr. Bhatnagar has registered his protest against the deterioration of cultural and ethical values. He has raised his voice against wrong whether inside or outside India. There is nothing altogether new in his sentiments, and nothing that should be termed 'all-time great'. In a sense, to be more truthful, a poet is original not in his subject-matter but in the treatment of his matter. And Dr. Bhatnagar surely has his own way of saying common-place ordinary things effectively. And for that purpose, he has resorted to all sorts of poetical devices - rhythm, resonance, consonance, figures of speech, imagery, repetition, juxtaposition, parallelism, contrast and infrequent use of poetical licence. In simple yet telling words, he stands for an es-

tablishment of high and eternal values of life.

What is breath-taking about Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is raising and answering several questions related with human life in general, even when he speaks as 'I'. Avidly, he pins his faith on naturalness and transparency. With an open heart he suffers what others of his fellow-beings suffer. His bruised psyche bearing patiently the brutal strokes of cruel Time rebelliously pleads for redress. To be sure, he has travelled a long way as an excelsior with his unflinching faith and optimistic vision. In his poems the terms of address 'रे', 'ओ', 'कि' are not mere exclamations but expressions of defiance.

A word about the poetic technique. Most of the poems are in '*vers libre*' and have no length-limit. The poet could have easily extended them to include some more matter. That way, the poet has evinced his maturity in exercising self-control lest the poems should be taxing and monotonous. His language that is keeping in with his changing moods has a propensity towards the vernacular - so often full of Urdu, Arabic, Persian, *Deshaj* and colloquial words.

Some of the verses and lines outstanding for their appeal speak of the poet's originality of conception and composition. Some of them - figurative, idyllic, picturesque, melodious and moving - are :

'बज रही हैं मौत की शहनाइयाँ / कूकती वीरान हैं अमराइयाँ!', कल्पना की छाँह में!, पिघलता जा रहा विश्वास मन का मोम-सा बन!, स्वप्न की डोरी बनाकर झूल लूँ!, लज्जा के रंग भर-भर लाओगी!, अभावों की धधकती आग से!, 'पर, टपकती छत तले / सद्यः प्रसव से / एक माता आह भरती है!,' 'पास के घर में / थकी-सी अर्द्ध-निद्रित / तीस-वर्षीया कुमारी / करवटें लेती किसी की याद में!,' धधका सत्य का अंगार!, 'मानवता के उर्वर खेतों पर / जिसने कोढ़ उगाया था!,' 'रात ... / जगने के लिए है!,' 'क्रोधित चम्बल / खिल-खिल हँसती है, / बाँधों की बाहों में / अलबेली-सी / अपने को कसती है!,' 'असंख्य परतें लपेटे / आदमी अब पारदर्शी है!,' हर सुख की बाँहें / बाँहों में ले लें!, वसुधा बनी विधवा!, 'सृष्टि की गहरी घुटन में / दाह से झुलसे गगन में!,' 'कौन तुम जाती / सजल पुरवा सरीखी डोल!'

Lyrical compositions like :

'चाँद सोता है', 'जिजीविषा', 'धूल-श्री', 'कौन हो तुम?', 'चाँद से', 'कोई शिकायत नहीं'। - are touching and moving.

Some lines that are things of beauty are joys for ever (सूक्तियों)

- सौन्दर्य जग का किसी की अमानत नहीं है!
- कि ऐसी भूल भी कैसी / सदा जो भूल जाती है!
- आदमी ही आदमी की कैद से मुक्त हो, मुक्त हो!
- कब होता है विश्वास करारों से कम?

A reader can never forget the obsessing feel of the lines quoted : he cannot remove them from his memory for the best of his efforts.

On the whole, Dr. Bhatnagar's poems, generally speaking, find an echo in *Suhrad* readers' hearts and minds as they are an effective expression of the wide-spread fear, internal and external strife, breaking individuals, families, terrorism and angst. Dr. Bhatnagar's tragedy is the tragedy of the whole age. True that history does not take a new turn with lurid depiction of evil forces; and yet it is to visionary poets full of missionary zeal that people look for a new direction and a new world. What distinguishes Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar from other contemporary poets is his deep-rooted faith, ideology and whole-hearted dedication to his avocation of writing poetry. Poetry, in a sense, has become his very life-blood. In his poetry we have a rare blend of reality and idealism. He is mostly straightforward, transparent and vigorous. Surprisingly, the poems - small in size, packed with thoughts and feelings - draw readers' attention for their beauties of imagery, effective use of figures of speech and simplicity of diction. The poems mirror the altruistic unacknowledged legislator and deep human concern of a praiseworthy man of letters. His poems have extended the frontiers of Hindi poetry in respect of both quantity and quality. Quite an outstanding feature of the poems is their variety and vividness. A whole age stands artistically revealed with all its complexities, worries and concerns in them. Looking neither for power nor pelf, neither for name nor for profit, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has ever remained true to his own conscience. His life-vision deep-rooted in his historical knowledge and sense is the driving force of his mighty

mind moving pen.

Voice of faith in the poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar

— Dr. Mahashweta Chaturvedi

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is known as modern Indian poet of Hindi, expressing the aspirations of humanity and intellect. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar creates verses out of his deeply felt pains and immediate physical suffering, even then his heart is not broken, we hear voice of faith in his poetry.

Dr. Mahendra is a versatile Hindi poet of India. Many collections of his poems have been translated into several languages, mostly in English & French.

Dr. H. C. Gupta has rightly observed in his foreword to 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry', "Here it may be pointed out that Prof. Mahendra Bhatnagar has composed poems in all three modes – narrative, dramatic & lyrical."¹

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar, a well known retired professor of Hindi, respected both at home & abroad, has been creating poems of faith out of his woes, trials & tribulations. Overpowered by courage, he kindles our dead passions :

So please sing me a song

Fresh and sweet

In a new strain!

Ask me not

How many times

Did I fall and rise

On the stream of life!²

For the poet, love is the light of life :

Lots of love – love

That I have treasured all my life

To each of those

Who are distressed

**Either by fate
or the ways of the world!³**

Each and every poem of the poet gives the message of indomitable courage :

**Because the fact is this –
That in each calamity of his
All alone has lived Man!⁴**

According to the poet Mahendra Bhatnagar the sighs and wailings will be turned into sweet melodies only when there is faith and courage :

**That lightning flashes not in the blaze of noon
That the breaths of the undaunted
are wasted not – no, never!⁵**

Like an optimistic poet he awakens the clouded heart that does not know its exact position :

**Who is it
That stops you
From telling the truth?
Who keeps in check
Your consciousness?
Who has chained
Your aspirations?⁶**

His poems are encouraging the hearts :

**Let the voice be free
Unbound!
Speak –**

**This stiffness will end
And each word
Will become radiant!⁷**

Extending his praises for man, he sings :

**Indomitable are they
Wonderful bend they have!⁸**

For the poet 'Duty' is true worship :

**To love
This life, this world
Is what a man must do!⁹**

The voice of faith is needed if one wants to remove the

stumbling blocks in the way of success. For the poet "Stone will turn into wax, the hot desert into a tidal sea" by the ceaseless faith :

**Sing
The whirlwinds will calm down;
The dark night
Will turn into a golden day!¹⁰**

On every step, the poet inspires :

**Sing, that defeat victory became!
Sing, so that life a lyric became!¹¹**

Full of faith man has to covet his life with beauty and heart with an earthly fragrance.

Everywhere are seen mines of gunpowder, terror fills the skies, hot are the winds with sulphur, in such a fearful situation, the poet inspires :

**We have to walk,
Our iron feet pounding
The pits, the trenches
Again and again!¹²**

One has to live from moment to moment, so the poet sings:

**Out of my body
A new creation
Is sculpted by the day,
Fighting on my strength
Has the day been victorious!¹³**

For the poet 'Radiance' is the light of life, so he inspires :

**It destroys darkness
Spread over faraway paths!
It fills
Each house with glow
Born out of an inner flame!¹⁴**

For him, people devoid of faith, courage and indomitable will power are totally thoughtless :

**People only walk behind
The crowd
Their destination**

They don't know!¹⁵

The dark clouds show the rays of hope and faith to the poet

Oh who is it

That opens the closed windows

Of my heart

To peep in

Like a spark in the dark clouds

Of a gloomy life?¹⁶

The poem entitled 'Accept Me' is full of the rays of hopes when the poet dedicates his life to 'celestial Beauty' :

I offer these to you

In adoration

O Celestial Beauty

Every little bit of my heart

Is filled with

Your beautiful golden rays!¹⁷

Even the death gives the message of life to the poet :

Death, : an unbreakable string

Tied to birth.¹⁸

The poet has emerged in a new phase of consciousness, with a sense of courage, will-power and faith, acceptance of his lot and haunting presence of the moments of truth. 'Faith' is a constant presence in most of his poems. His poems are smooth and simple but imbued with as complex and rigorous thought, drawing on the innermost emotions and feelings of the moments of woes and reflections.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar reveals a startling clarity or vision, profound insights and is full of allusions, irony, paradox, humour, taunting and satire. The poet has deep compassion for humanity and his poems strive to bring solace, peace, faith and courage to the society we live in. Crispness and catchiness apart, the poems are illustrative of the poet's imagination and expressive richness. One hopes that the poet will continue to arouse faith in us and allow us the pleasure of reading some nice poems of Hindi translated in English. It is also true that the poems in original Hindi cannot be compared with the translated form in English language.

References

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- 5 We know it well / Ibid p. xxxiv
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- 8 Indomitable / Ibid p. 39
- 9 Duty / Ibid p. 17
- 10 The Worship of Art / Ibid p. 1
- 11 Sing / Ibid p. 5
- 12 To Live / Ibid p. 21
- 13 Life / Ibid p. 31
- 14 Radiance / Ibid p. 49
- 15 People / Ibid p. 55
- 16 Who Are You? / Ibid p. 97
- 17 Accept Me / Ibid p. 99
- 18 Life-Death / Ibid p. 241

**Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar :
A Progressive Humanist Poet**

– *Dr. P. Jayaraman*

Life is so short that nobody would be able to travel far; there is always an eternity to traverse, but in the life we are often overtaken by fatigue easily with all the physical and mental strains and stresses. This is the reason, of course, everybody whose fate has left him to suffer and suffer alone, wants to get back to the innocent childhood. This life seems to be a wonderfully pleasant place to live, but it is not so. The fact is that life has got a thousand-fold face and it is very difficult to bring in the life an eternal sunshine and laughter through all sorts of miseries which are the products of man's action whether it is of political, social or mental nature. But when his action becomes good to the mankind, he does not limit himself to his own self; instead, stretches over the whole mankind. He carries optimistic outlook in the man and proves that every person is bound to get happiness in the world by overcoming all tortures, worries and sorrows. As Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has put it rightly :

**The smile of life has withered away,
And dark clouds shroud the moon! ...
Constrained are we to lie down there,
Fatigued and broken by pain.**

(‘Life Today’)

**His eye-lids are heavy with sleep,
As he dreams of days carefree of childhood.**

(‘The Middle Class’)

**In the black blanket of darkness
You search it out,
And with it light your lamp,
Soon shall you see,
Soon shall you see,
A myriad lamp lits up.**

(‘Conviction’)

In this world, one cannot be youth without being youthful in thoughts and actions. Life, in fact, is a ‘unit’ of all diversities. But to maintain that unit is essential to live in true sense.

The man in this so-called modern society has become selfish, narrow-minded and crazy for wealth at the cost of his own brethren. The labourer does labour, the farmer produces food for all; but the fruit of his labour is enjoyed by so-called civilized community. But how long this injustice can continue? How far a man can suppress the growth of others? How long the suppressed man can be dumb, blind and deaf? A day is bound to come when justice will take its own place. Rich cannot be happy always, he will have to come down from his palace to the hut.. Now the ripe time has come and the man has started realising the cultural oneness of the entire community. The mental darkness of the world has now disappeared and the glorified lamp is smiling everywhere even flickering alone on the face of the furious mind. The emancipation of human being has become possible only through tears. Dr. Mahendra says :

**As the light of conviction burns eternal
For a better world to come;
Conviction therefore is firm
That the transitory dusk
Shall pass through the transitional darkness
And wrest from heavens
A rosy dawn of life new.**

(‘Conviction’)

The majority of poems in this collection carry the mood of doubt, scepticism, enthusiasm for the welfare of the outer world and the creation of values well suited for the requirements of the present age and the most strikingly, the base of each poem is the poet's optimistic belief in the establishment of socialistic pattern of society although the poet often describes the dark and painful part of the modern society and reveals a tragic sense of life, of course, being conscious of ultimate love of mankind. In fact the poet's humanitarian attitude cuts across the barriers of class and creed and tries to peep into the torments of the human soul. But at

the same time, he has faith in salvation of mankind ultimately. As for example, the following lines may be seen :

**The death's orchestra plays on,
The mango-groves once jubilant and gay
Are silent and deserted now,
But with faith divine
In the midst of tears and sighs
The man laughs on!
By the cravings of love!**
(‘Lust For Life’)

The poet may be well described as progressive humanist for he has succeeded in enlarging the area of human sympathies and brought the feelings and problems of the ordinary men and women of the society within its creative orbit, thus making the poetry contemporary.

In short, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems are expressions of painful frustrations of modern middle and lower classes and also the pressures and strains on the human condition and of humanitarian approach of the poet towards the inhuman values and situations of contemporary life and they carry the poet's courage to confront the reality in all its totality. It seems to me that the poet in Dr. Bhatnagar is full of faith and confidence over the constructive orgies that mark Indian life. A careful study of his poems reveals that he is not indifferent to human values; on the contrary, he has conscious vision of human relationships and emotions. His poetry tends towards being a moving document about the possibility of human conscience in our present-day society.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : The Man and His Works

– Prof. Lakshmi Shanker Sharma

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is among those promising talents in Hindi poetry who run away from congregations and glare of limelight and do much needed solid, substantial work of perennial nature in their private corner.

He comes of a family of teachers. He first saw the light of the day in 26 June 1926 at Jhansi, in Uttar Pradesh though the theatre of his activities has always been Madhya-Pradesh. He obtained his B. A. degree from Victoria College, Gwalior in 1945, and started working as a geography teacher at Model High School, Ujjain in 1945. After a year he was posted as assistant teacher at Maharajwada Govt. High School, Ujjain. But he never allowed grass to grow under his feet and continued his devotion to Hindi literature and amidst all the demands made on his time and energy by a government job he creditably passed his M. A. in Hindi from Nagpur University in the year 1948 and from the same university in 1957 he earned his Ph. D. degree in Hindi Literature. At present Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is serving the education department of Madhya Pradesh government as head of Hindi Department at Government College. He started his poetic career in 1941. ‘Humkar’ is his first published poem which graced the pages of March 1944 issue of ‘*Vishal Bharat*’ (Calcutta). He has often combined the work of an editor with that of a teacher and poet. ‘*Sandhya*’ - a monthly and ‘*Pratikalpa*’ - a quarterly reached new heights when Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar took over their editorship. His genius has been widely recognized and rewarded. ‘*Ladkhadate kadam*’ (story-selection), ‘*Samasyamulak Upanyaskar Premchand*’ (Thesis for Ph. D.), ‘*Desh- Desh ki Baten*’ (Juvenile Literature) are some of his books which have won prizes and acclaim. His poems have been translated into Czech, English, Tamil, Telugu,

Malayalam, Kannada and many other Indian languages. Dr. Mahendra wields a mighty pen and with authority writes in practically all the branches of literature, but decidedly he is a poet in the final analysis and it mainly in the field of poetry that his genius has blossomed forth in ever new strength. He has to his credit ten selections of his poetic works : *Taron Ke Geet*, *Vihan*, *Abhiyan*, *Tooti Shrinkhalayen*, *Badalta Yug*, *Antaral*, *Nai Chetna*, *Madhurima*, *Jijeevisha*, and *Santaran*.

'*Taron Ke Geet*' contains twenty-one of his poems written from time to time on stars. The poet has looked at star-spangled night and burst forth into songs and beauty and delight. Some of the poems are pure nature poems and a delight to read. This very first selection of his poems has the needs of great promise. In '*Vihan*' are collected thirty-five poems which are marked with simplicity of diction and naturalness of expression. '*Vihan*' is an important step in poet's march to greater poetic glory. Sixty poems have been published under the title of '*Tootati Shrinkhalayen*'. Mahendra Bhatnagar has come out here as a poet and champion of the under dog and pioneer of 'progressivism' in Hindi poetry. Poems like '*Sankranti kal*', '*Jiwan-Dip*', '*Rat ka Alam*', '*Pashan Ur*', '*Mukti ki Pukar*' are clarion calls from the poet who has watched the misery of life from a close angle. Mahendra Bhatnagar's message in this selection is one of never dying optimism. In '*Abhiyan*', '*Badalta Yug*', '*Nai Chetna*', and '*Jijeevisha*' we come across poems which are saturated in realism. The cotemporary life in its truest and most faithful form and colour has been depicted with sympathy and breath of vision. Mahendra is revealed as a poet of unshakable faith in Man and his destiny. He champions the cause of the have-nots, of the down-trodden under dogs and believes that the world owes a debt to them. The poet's heart weeps out in sympathy with the poor and his pen pours out fire and satire on the aristocrats and bourgeoisie. '*Antaral*' contains poems addressed mostly to poet's self. These songs contain sometimes a dose of optimism, sometimes of determination Himalayan in nature, sometime a complaint to the world about unrecognition. The poet of '*Antaral*' has undying faith in dedicated work and believes that man matures only

when pitched against the mightly elemental forces. The undefeated battle against gigantic forces of nature is the glory of man's life. Songs of love and romance are collected under the title of '*Madhurima*'. These poems have the quality of restraint and expression at the same time. The poet has never stepped out of the limit sanity as is mostly the case with poets of love-theme. Some of the poems are remarkable captivating description of nature's beauty. '*Santaran*' is the latest of Mahendra Bhatnagar's collection of poems. It contains eight poems of various themes and also constitutes a bold experiment in craft and style. Free verse and verse of rhyme and metre both have been used with remarkable facility and felicity. Poems like '*Mao-Chao Ke Nam*', '*Rang Bedlega Gangan*', '*Shubh Kamnayan*', '*Astha*' are some of the jewels of the selection. This selection is one of the most important mile-stones in Mahendra Bhatnagar's onward journey. His is a wide sweep, comprehensiveness of view, catholicity of thought, simplicity of expression and depth of emotions and chiselled vocabulary - all have been combined to good effect.

Mahendra Bhatnagar has carved out a niche for himself in Hindi poetry. His is a voice, mighty and sonorous raised in support of progressivism. In fact he has not cared to write within the narrow limits of an 'ism', nor has his genius flowed within banks determined by a particular movement in literature. He is made of a more perennial stuff. He is decidedly not a poet of cloud-cuckoo land of romance nor is he an escapist. He is a poet of insuperable optimism, and Himalayan determination. and spiritual regeneration and has plenty of sympathy for the under-dog. The poet in Mahendra Bhatnagar is fully conscious of his responsibility to society and also to art. Gifted with a noble nature, fine expression, subtle sensibilities, and a responsible frame of mind Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is capable of great achievements and certainly has a bright future.



Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar : A Preface

– *Dr. Vidya Niwas Mishra*

I have gone through this anthology of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's selected forty poems. The thing which strikes foremost is the note of blazing optimism coming out of these poems, be they songs of love, songs of future of man or songs of the advent of a new era ushered in by the common man all over the world. Though unfortunately I cannot share this optimism, I am deeply moved by the vigour with which it has been projected by the poet. Mahendra Bhatnagar is Browning, Shelley and Maykovsky welded into one, he is a visionary, he is a comrade-in-arms and he is an architect. His **'Man fired with faith divine moves on'** because he is firm in his conviction that **'one day the heart-rose shall bloom in the midst of impediments galore.'** He seeks strength from 'the firmament' which **'has changed its colour'** and from the wind, which is always **'humming a tune,'** from the **'gracious mother earth'** which is blessing man with a life—**'long and happy.'**

He sings of youth in a new vein, youth for him is not a passing phase, it hope. Such a sincere optimism is a rare quality and deserves full applause; more so, when we have the perspective of a sad and sick man of today.

I have feeling that the vigorous rhythm of the original has not been carried fully to the English translations, may be, the barriers of language do not permit its export. The poet has a very sensitive ear for cadences and knows how to use them. His diction is chaste though racy, transparent and yet colourful, his imagery drawn partly from common-place, life and partly from poetic conventions, is simple and effective, it is not pretentious, as the so-called modern imagery is and is the most suited instrument for the content.

I envy the impetuosity of Mahendra Bhatnagar and at the same time I admire his patience, his conviction (**'the wall won't collapse'**) and his courage. If at times he is carried away by his creed, it only shows his zeal and not his weakness. If at times, he looks utterly lost in 'the masses idea', it only shows his devotion to the cause and not his lack of personality. If at times he turns a romantic visionary, it is an indicator of his fiery youth and not of his blindness to reality.

I sincerely hope, these poems along with their English renderings will be received well.



Mahendra Bhatnagar :
A poet of Life, Love, Light and Landscape

– *Prof. Ram Deo Acharya*

There are people who use the hackneyed phrase 'Existence in danger' over and over again and preach that man is disintegrating. We are tired of these meaningless slogans. They say that man's existence is being threatened by the forces—both internal and external. The bond of human-relationship is broken and a chaotic state of pessimism is ruling all-over the world. This cynical attitude pleads for disillusionment and defeatism without appreciating the terms. Since it was popularised by T.S. Eliot and other imagists in reaction against the Second World War, it has become a sophisticated fashion to talk of it just to earn the title 'Modern !' Poets with the vision of the 'Hollow men' and the 'Waste Land' were supported by the philosophical background of Sartre and Camus. Thus this fantastic belief was deep-rooted and it was fostered by a reactionary philosophy which advocated that man's existence was in peril.

In such a critical time, there are people who are fired with a glowing spirit of optimism and who believe in the final triumph of Man over all evils. These people, with progressive glance, would never wear empty shows. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar belongs to this category. His ambition is to create a new world free from all sorts of exploitation and capitalistic operations. He fights against the gloom of slavery and distinctions of caste, creed and communities. He sings about a glorious dawn that would merge out on the grave yard of imperialism and expansionism. Thus Dr. Mahendra has prophetic message to convey.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a poet of life, love, light and landscape. As a poet of life, he strikes a blow against old and worn-out traditions and he dreams of Man's Regeneration and Resurrection.

Life, as Dr. Mahendra sees it, is corrupt and submitted to the evil designs. Thus the Natural Man who '**reaps the paddy**' has a wasting body :

The teeth are fallen
Hair are Dry and dull.

Yet there '**dances a smile in the wrinkles of his face**' this is Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's faith in life. The poet finds the world in the grip of a storm, which causes all pervading darkness, he gives the slogan, '**Light the lamp**'. He is conscious of the afflictions imposed on Man, '**I have drained the cup of poison to the dregs,**' but the poet is not alone in the world. He is one of those millions who are oppressed with tyranny. Thus the International Man is with him :

Myriads of men around me....
Lend me strength.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar requires that man should be re-initiated into humanity and should be attuned to the Real Life. Thus the poet dreams of a Perfect Man after the annihilation of all social and political barriers. At present, the human culture is polluted and the life has lost its dignity, '**Every breath is a shiver and the body all a shudder.**' Dr. Mahendra penetrates into the world with a seething weapon and finds –

Civilization a synonym of violence and loot....
Dawn is lost in desolate darkness.

He compares life to a widowed belle and '**Everyone is playing the funeral music, and coffins colourful are being arranged.**' This apprehension of reality inspires him to wage a war upon the gloom, because people are constrained and fatigued, Life is crippled and paralysed. The poet is conscious of his country's wild class-distinctions and he has a large-hearted sympathy for the down-trodden. Under the spell of gloom, he has a faith in Man's struggle and liberation and this Faith is firm-rooted and unquenchable. This Faith is expressed through the symbols '**the carpet of Violet rays**' and '**the tiny lamp of man's undying faith**'. He announces :

Conviction therefore is firm

**That the transitory dusk
Shall pass through the transitional darkness
And wrest from heavens.
A rosy dawn of life new.**

His conviction is so assured, '**The wall of concrete conviction can never collapse.**' because it is the wall of toiling masses standing against the pool of the imperial lust. This conviction is extended to the objects of Nature in which the poet finds zeal and joy. Thus the '**Earth is moving**' and '**the inert world vibrates with new song**' and '**the Night is over.**'

He sketches a powerful image of National liberation and speaks of the broken chains. He has vision that people would be '**aroused from slumber deep**' and '**The powerful empires shrank with fear.**' '**The powerful current of Time washed away the empires.**' It is a powerful poetic image of liberty. To the poet, the Life smiles and imprints a thrilling kiss on our lips. Courage, the poet thinks, is undaunted and therefore all kinds of prison-cells are bound to be broken. The demon of capitalism must breathe its last and a pack of pigeons must arrive to deliver a message of joy.

The canvas of the poet is not narrow. He has dreams for the International Man—from California's death-valley, Kalahari, Sahara to Abyssinia and Tundra. An unfettered paradise would descend upon all these countries –

**For the first time the world is so wide
For the first time the sacrifice is so vast !**

And thus, it is a poetry of Life, a poetry against all sorts of exploitation, expansionism, aggression, barbarous savagery, primitive injustice and ferocious capitalism.

As a poet of love Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has no philosophical pretensions. He expresses his unmasked love for his beloved in honest phrases. He is never artificial and sentimentally unbalanced. In his love-poems, he can be passionate, but he is never voluptuous. His attitude is well-sustained and emotions are well-controlled. He looks to a woman as a companion, a comrade – not as a mate for sexual gratification, Woman is not an instrument to be

handled with care or without care, she is a friend and a mother of Man's children. Therefore Dr. Mahendra's love for her is love of a real friend and it is dedicated to the pure smile of the beloved. The poet has an ambition to be enshrined into her heart.

The poet is held bewitched by her beauty and we witness a splendour of description :

**When before my eager eyes
With a pitcher of nectar you will come.**

At this union, the tongue will be silent and eyes will be more eloquent and expressive.

The '**Day-Dreaming**' is a beautiful piece giving birth to new images and symbols. Here the original is so vigorous that the translation fails to keep pace with it. Here is a magnificent example, when the translator does his best to export the original –

**But set afloat in fancy's ocean
Lamps of long-long cherished dreams!
And draw living Ajanta frescoes
On the Canvas, my heart!
How intensely I have been seized
By your beauty !**

When the poet is seized by her beauty, he feels like a '**traveller free bonds**'. His feelings are compared to doves released in the firmament. This is done to soothe a heart ablaze in the raging fire of her want. Finally, Dr. Mahendra thinks that love is 'God's gift' and life is '**a glamorous marriage procession.**' He says about a lover :

**Lucky is he, for him alone there is
Spring in Nature, rains in the world.**

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar does not express any kind of mystical attitude of Nature. He is more concerned with its physical aspect, because he is a stubborn realist. He is not akin to Wordsworth and Rabindra Nath and Other romantic poets. He paints life-size, vivid and graphic picture of nature. He has no mysterious secrets and solitudes. He adores the physical charm of the nymph. He never penetrates deep into her bosom, he depicts the face. He in-

vites wind to come **'Drunk and forgetful of mind.'** and **'to vibrate the heart-strings'**. Thus he writes about the splendour of nature –

Suffused with dim red are the skies
Smeared as if with 'Gulal'
Are the specious cheeks of heaven
Bedecked with fineries.

Similarly the beauty of the moon haunts him– **'Cosy lies the moon on the star-spangled carpet'** He adds his reflections to the moon-light and his curiosity. **'At Dawn, nobody knows where flees the moonlight'** is that of a child. Thus Dr. Mahendra is never obscure and meaninglessly philosophical while describing the glory of nature.

Now we come to the architecture of his poetry. In the present volume, there are poems written in years ranging from 1948 to 1957. Naturally, the style of these poems does not satisfy the new evaluation of poetry. It's a matter of loss that some of his fine pieces, published in the 'Madhyam', the 'Gyanodaya' and other big literary magazines have not been included in it. These present poems, apart from their beauty and vigour, employ an idiom that is worn-out and old-fashioned. The poet has some set-phrases and catch-words to meet the requirements of the metre. He has an extra-love for Chhayavadi cliches and stereotyped terms. His old-fashioned love for language is a sort of romance, with which he does not part company.

Sometimes he makes direct statements which are more slogans and less poetry. Such a poetry has no deep echoes. Though he has sincerity of belief, he lacks sound ideas to convey. He has no great poetic vision. His external development as a poet is mature, but he does not peep into inner conflicts which are valuable ingredients of poetry.

So we can find faults in his poetry, as it is the easiest thing to find fault. Apart from these defects, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a lyrical genius and writes with the force of sentiment. In this respect he is a true poet unlike those multi-million-misusers of poetry, whose poetry is a laborious process and devoid of sentiment.

Dr. Mahendra is a little prophet believing in regeneration of this world. Therefore he writes poems like **'Woman Reborn'** which have many quotable lines. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's writing is progressive, though the progressive movement in poetry has been lulled to sleep. The poet has the spirit of adjustment with the new trends and he is struggling hard to catch the new style and idiom. He tries to satisfy modern standards.

It's not safe to pass a final verdict on the genius of the poet, but it can be safely said that Dr. Mahendra is a poet of his own style, who uses symbols—Smoke, Night, Darkness, Storm, Dawn, Ears of Wheat etc.—to create new effects. His love-poems are fine pieces, but like all realists, his love is sacrificed at the altar of Truth. His robust optimism has height of passion in modernized imagery. It has the real quality of a great dream.



Motivational Strains in *After the Forty Poems*

— *Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh*

After the Forty Poems may be an additional volume of Mahendra Bhatnagar that consists of 25 poems of vigour, energy, liveliness and precision. Mahendra Bhatnagar who is now an acknowledged and well-established name among the literati of the region has added one more small collection of poems in which he deals with several themes of love, philosophy, spirituality, social consciousness, political awareness and human psychology. Mahendra Bhatnagar not only hits at the weakness of the society and human being but he heals and reforms through the medium of motivational strains into his poetry and inspires the man to the noble ideas and ideals so that humanity may rise more and more and attain perfection.

There is no any single dominancy of any particular school in Indo Anglian poetry, yet the most notable achievement of modern Indo English poet is that he has succeeded in moulding the English language according to Indian ethos and Indian setting. India has a glorious history of the dauntless warriors and fighters who struggled for the sake of Nation and whose heart were brimming with the feeling of enthusiasm to perform miracles in their lives and what is the most glaring fact is that they not only attained their desired goal but also set new milestones and morals behind them. The poet in Bhatnagar is pretty aware of the fact so he peaks boldly bearing the ancient Indian glory in mind:

**Lustrous and indomitable,
We are the sons of the soil
We stand by the toil
We cherish the youthful vigour;
We will pull
Thy bridle—mind you—
To give ye direction, / Every time!**
(‘O, Winged Steeds Of destiny’)

The unrequiting zeal of the poet remains vibrant in many of the poems of collection like ‘We know it well’, ‘Stop It’, ‘I Appeal’, ‘The Worship of Art’, ‘Through the Unwanted Moments’, ‘How to Suffer Pain : A Point of View’ and ‘A Submission’, in which the poet urges the man not to accept defeat or take life as a burden but fight and face the devil of destiny. Like Tagore he tries to awake “the Countrymen” into that ‘heaven of freedom’ where ‘the mind is without fear and head is held high’ or say in the words of Bhatnagar:

**We’ll march removing hurdles,
Cleaving the dark
We’ll march!
For, we know it well-
That lightning flashes not in the blaze of noon!**
(‘We Know It Well’)

His firm credence is that ‘the opposing gales will in wonder / and the adversities will quickly end and he adds:

**For, we know it well —
That the breaths of the undaunted
are wasted not — no, never!**
(‘We Know It Well’)

‘**I Appeal**’ is a poem in which the poet appeals ‘to the millions of the exploited world/to the sighs of the starving/ the naked and the oppressed and the hapless ones’-not to grope in the dark or cherish any dream in their eyes but appeals them to open their eyes for ‘a new dawn’ and ‘a new millennium’ and in the last stanza the poet becomes utter optimistic and motivational when he sings:

**I appeal to those who worship life,
Those who are the living angels on earth,
Who lend their might to the common masses —
Dig deep the soil
The Mother Earth has been waiting for years
To welcome you,
With the gifts of silver and gold.
Strike, strike,
The turn of the poor has come at last!**

In this world of ours, there are millions of people and all

are unique in their own ways, some are sleeping while others are harvesting the crop. The world that is appearing before us has now been utterly changed but it is our own view point to judge the things with our own distinction;

**A new world has emerged though,
Some take it still to be an evil world;
Scared of their own shadows,
They are caught in illusions wild!**

('Many A Man')

To the poet, the aim of life is to worship the art, fill each heart with love and sing the songs of hope because it 'is meant to rouse a sense of beauty/in every man.' He appeals:

**O sing,
The world shall excel the Heaven in beauty,
No man will suffer old age;
A man will only and angel be
And a woman,
A divine damsel she will be!**

('The Worship Of Art')

He again appeals us in 'an awareness within to fill deep the heart/with anguish /and the compassionate eyes/tears!' because only agony is the fate and only it will succour the man so he urges to 'accept the eyes benumbed, yet lovely hand' and he adds:

**Why, accept the grief stricken life;
The tiring moments —
The dark, dirty and tearful moments
Of a darksome life,
Accept them cheerfully.**

('An Awareness Within')

The poet neither preaches nor teaches to his readers but in some poems of confessional tone reveals his own experiences:

**I wish I could
All, all my life
Bring the sun and the moon
To the deep-most valleys
Of my heart
To kill darkness!**

× × ×

All, all my life

**I caused the bewitching birds of fancy
—like silken slips of multi coloured cloth
To fly free in the immense sky!**

('The Irony Of Fate')

But the poet never becomes disappointed or sullen rather he faces dauntlessly the curse inflicted upon him or the rain of afflictions. He says:

**O bestower of benedictions!
The life-giver
The poisonous gift
That you have given me**

....I accept.

('I Accept')

The poem, 'How to Suffer Pain : A Point of View' is full of motivation to smile and sing the songs of love burying sobs and sighs and 'being oblivious of the sad and painful moments /of a lonely life, so that love may outlive all':

**Sing
The songs of love
Love, that is a great boon,
Love, that is priceless,
Love, that smells like life's
sweet-scented shrubs!**

The poems of the collection, therefore, bring to light the most distinctive feature of Bhatnagar's poetry, the tone of motivation and inspiration. His unspoiled optimistic attitude towards life and its surroundings, the attempt to find identity through nature, values and art; the search for the meaning of an instant; and the poise of harmony, peace and calm enriching the aestheticity of experience make him the poet of progressive class and a man of higher human values. In the realm of Indian readership, his poetry obtains a peculiar place because it is a perennial fount of motivation to face, fight, live and let live.



**Gifted Poet Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar
[‘Forty Poems’ & ‘After The Forty Poems’]**

– *Dr. Gupteshwar Prasad*

These two collections of poems are the English renderings of Hindi Poems originally designed by the gifted poet Mahendra Bhatnagar. The translators have taken great pains to put the thoughts of the poet in the garb of English language in all their subtlety and variety and have quite succeeded in finding adequate phrases and idioms to convey the original nuances of Hindi words. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar writes at the keenest edge of his time and hence the new awakening is forcefully voiced in his poetry. He attacks every spot which is vulnerable to ridicule. He finally emerges as a poet of love, life, and light. Lines like :

The man lives on by the cravings of love!

(‘Forty Poems’ / Lust for Life / p. 14)

Time shall pass away, but youth will endure!

(‘Forty Poems’ / Youth / p. 28)

Your destination itself will arrive one day!

Do not lose heart!

(‘Forty Poems’ / Lose Not Your Heart / p.30)

**Hero is he, who has’t shed a tear and has treasured the
anguish in the heart!**

(‘Forty Poems’ / The Man / p. 62)

I am not alone!

(‘Forty Poems’ / Not Alone / p. 66)

No more shall the dark shroud envelop our heads!

(‘Forty Poems’ / The Firmament Will Change Its Colour / p. 92)

The masses are never smitten by death!

(‘Forty Poems’ / The Masses / p. 104)

The world shall excel the Heaven in beauty!

The worship of Art is meant to fill each heart with love!

(‘After The Forty Poems’ / The Worship of Art / p. 28)

I live on the bed of fire!

(‘After The Forty Poems’ / Life / p. 36)

A new light is blazing in every direction!

(‘Forty Poems’ / Resurgence / p. 110)

and countless such other optimistic, exhilarating and inspiring utterances and exhortations abound his poems that leave us morally and spiritually uplifted.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar, like Shelley and Iqbal is a visionary. Like Keats, Tennyson and ‘Nirala’, he knows how to create concrete images and produce sound-effect. Most of the poems contained in these two volumes have architectural and pictorial quality about them and the verbal music produced by the sheer jingle of words casts a magic spell on us and rings in our ears for long. In respect of word-witchery, the poet seems to have few equals in modern Hindi poetic-world.

But Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poetry has the fineness and the failings that usually go hand-in-hand with modern poets : on the one hand delicacy, a quick eye, a gift for image-making and a natural sense of pity for the poor and the oppressed; on the other, technical unadventurousness and a tendency to choose trite and hackneyed phrases and a predilection for verbal jugglery. There are places where his verse might seem to limp and the twists and turns might appear to be redundant. His diction is traditional which does not do justice to a felicity such as :

My lustful desires are restive and oppressed

विवक्षित भावनाएँ / आकुलित हैं / आक्रामित हैं!

(‘After The Forty Poems’ / ‘A State of Mind’ / ‘विक्षोभ’ : प. 34-35)

His wandering rhythms often lose themselves and there runs through the collections that note of plaintive rhetoric which make most of the poetry of the twenties listlessly unmemorable. One can also traverse certain unfortunate points where the translation is better than the original, for example :

That the breaths

of the undaunted are washed not-no, never!

हिम्मत की साँसें / कभी व्यर्थ जाती नहीं हैं!

(‘After The Forty Poems’ / ‘We Know It Well’ / ‘हमें यह पता है’ : प. 14-15)

Shaken the slumber for the first time!

आज पहली बार जागी है!

('Forty Poems' / 'For The First Time' / 'पहली बार', प. 114-115)

**In the heap of files drowned,
caught in the labyrinth of life!**

और वह उलझा हुआ है / फाइलों के ढेर में / (जिन्दगी के फेर में!)

('After The Forty Poems' / 'The Middle Class' another aspect / '

मध्य - वर्ग' : चित्र दो, प. 80-81)

But on the whole, the poems are readable and enjoyable.

[5 Feb. 1980]



'Exuberance and other poems'

– Dr. R. S. Sharma

The seventy-five poems of **Mahendra Bhatnagar** selected for English translation by **Ravinandan Sinha** represent a wide range in terms of theme, mood and tone. They give us a glimpse of **Mahendra Bhatnagar's** high stature as a Hindi poet, who can induce in the reader serious thinking as well as aesthetic delight.

The collection opens with 'Exuberance' (*Umang*) presenting a highly charged sensuous description of the transitional hour of the day. In the midst of mixed light and shade and insistent draughts of wind, we glimpse the body of the beloved :

Impassioned

And knowingly getting trembling-wet

Is the beloved's body!

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is most successful in vivifying directly-experienced scene of Nature and prismatic states of weather; he often makes the objects of Nature to carry symbolic meaning and convey dedicate and transitory states of the mind. 'Birthday' finds a fitting conclusion in the lamp, which has kept burning in the midst of storms. Loss of hope is analogous to ' **the twittering branch of the evening that suddenly went deaf and mute.**' 'Waiting' is a series of Nature processes that suggest agony of waiting. 'Yearning' makes us feel what it is to dwell in the lap of Nature - silk-smooth grass, greenish thorns, butterflies wearing pied printed saris, the tamarind and guava trees.

Love is received by the poet in the form of a blessing and it lifts him to a new level of being with a sense of miraculous release. The emotion approaches the poet's heart by means of quiet gestures : ' **Since / We knew each other - / Involuntarily / Sweet songs**

began to flow / From my mute lips. ('Meeting'). As soon as the beloved touches the forehead of the lover, all his problems dissolve and a stronger feeling of joy fills his heart : **'In my heart / Suddenly burst forth / Thousands of / Morning fresh flowers'** (Touch') In the course of his life, **Mahendra Bhatnagar** has witnessed the national shame of subjugation and an intense desire to attain freedom. He has felt the joy of being independent, he has also shared the triumphs and sorrows of free India. All these experiences are preserved by him in memorable verse steeped throughout this collection - and indeed, on a larger scale, in the vast corpus of his writing.

Born in the land of Laxmibai, when he rouses the warriors to advance and crush the enemy, he reminds us of Subhadrakumari Chauhan and when he takes up a national theme, he has something of Maithilisharan Gupta. And when he writes of the have-nots, he exploited and the labouring workers, he shows genuine empathy, and the verse assumes revolutionary overtones.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar knows what it is to feel failure and disappointment, but his abiding strength is in courage and will to survive and overcome. The poet is aware of his broken dreams when the sweetness of a loving heart changed into poison. ('Unwanted') He tells us how difficult it is to create a fresh world of equality ('Futile'). He is aware of the pain of separation from dear ones who left this world, and doesn't know whom to call ('Solitary'). He carries a wounded psyche with a bitter taste in the mouth ('Hurt') With the personal sense of failure he joins the general sense of suffering and disillusionment of our age : **'We / Bearing the pain of the wounded age / Will carry the garbage of history'** ('Torment') When dealing with this mood, **Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar** is a modernist like **W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot**.

On the other hand, the note of buoyancy and hope is even stronger. It is in the nature of man to love all created things and beautiful objects; it is also natural to him to imagine beautiful worlds

('Duty') The poet is fully conscious of the dignity and power of labour ('The Valiant Workers') For him, experience has proved that the dark hours are bound to pass and day will surely dawn ('Experience - Proved') It is true that man is powerless before destiny and nothing can stop the progress of human knowledge and science. His deepest insight is that which all great thinkers and poets have realized : **'In this life / There is nothing, / Nothing indeed / More beautiful than love / Anywhere!'** But he also knows that there is nothing more difficult than love - it is an ideal not easily to be achieved. Yet try we must because as W.H. Auden describes in a poem, 'We must love one another, or die.'

Coming to the translation into English, Ravi Nandan Sinha has achieved a fair measure of success in transferring the theme, tone and poetic quality of the Hindi poems into English. Being a poet himself, Sinha has made full use of his imaginative resources as a result of which many lines strike the reader as original rather than translations. I give below a few examples to establish this aspect of Sinha's translation :

**The mourning night
Washed the whole creation
With droplets of dew.**

(Failed')

**It
Has never happened before -
That words
Of myriad expressions,
Of various intents
Have become hollow,
Ineffective,
Mere signs!**

(It Has Never Happened Before')

**I never wanted it -
That the tiredness**

**Of failed fancies
Should break wings,
That youth
Should not kiss
The riding tides!**

(‘Unwanted’)

Many more examples can be cited but what deserves our special attention is the fact that Sinha has been able to translate the poetic discourse without departing from the literality of the original text.

I take this opportunity to dilate a little on the problems of literary translation, especially of poetry. The task here is not merely to transfer the denotative content, but to find equivalences for nuances of feeling and tone as well as for images, sound patterns, rhythm and metre. And every word in a poem has a deep meaning and connotation. Since every language has its own sound system, grammar and semantics as well as connotative and cultural associations along with literary conventions, it is impossible to translate a poem into another language completely and exhaustively. I shall now discuss this issue by considering a few examples. Let us focus our attention on the first five lines of the poem titled ‘**Umang**’ in Hindi. Does *sandhya kal* evoke the idea of ‘conjunction’; should *dhoop* be translated as ‘sun’ or ‘light’, is *phuhar* better rendered by ‘shower’, ‘spray’ or ‘rain’; and how to capture the echoic element in *rimjhima*? I would suggest the following rendering in view of the above queries : **“Time of conjunction : / In the midst of sun and shade / Falls the spray / And the sky is all / Drizzle, drizzle!”**

When we examine the second poem, called ‘**Dharma**’, it appears the poet is dealing with something deeper than duty or moral obligation : to me it seems he is talking about human nature as contrasted with animal nature. The title of the fourth poem has been translated into ‘**Climax**’, which is perfectly in order but it is not supported by the contents of the poem. I think there is a kind of

aporia in the Hindi poem itself. In the poem the crucial point is the subtle, tiny difference that divides two conditions or states of the mind. ‘*Charam bindu*’ is rather strong term for this indeed and ‘*climax*’ is equally so. In the poem, the poet is actually speaking of the ‘point of difference’, the thin dividing line that separates two contrasting states. I am reminded of a poem by Langston Hughes. He has almost exactly the same theme and tone : talks about the minute difference that is between “living and dying”, “weeping and crying”. He called the poem ‘**Border Line**’ and this seems to me the most appropriate title.

These observations are intended to indicate the complexity of the task of a translator of poetry. It is commendable that Ravi Nandan Sinha has displayed exceptional competence in accomplishing the task. I am glad he has made Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poetry accessible to the readers of English.



‘Exuberance and other poems’

– *Dr. N. P. Sing*

Mahendra Bhatnagar has been a prolific poet in Hindi who has published seventeen anthologies of poems spanning the decades after independence. ‘Exuberance and other poems’ is an English translation of seventy-five of his poems published on the eve of the completion of seventy-five years of an academically eventful life. These poems have been chosen by **Ravi Nandan Sinha** who has been the Editor of ‘The Quest’, an international journal published from Ranchi since 1987.

The anthology begins with a lyrical poem *Exuberance* in which lover’s response to the fall of rains in the evening has been visualised. The knocking of an eager wind and the drizzle makes the lover feel the tremors in the beloved’s drenched frame. The poet’s gaze is however not confined to female flesh :

**The evening,
Caught between light and shade
The rain falls,
The sky drizzles!**

**Repeatedly,
See how
The eager wind
Knocks the door-
Expected, unexpected!**

**Far and near,
In fields in market places and on the crossroads,
Impassioned
And knowingly getting trembling-wet
Is the beloved’s body!**

Recognition is a satirical poem in which our attention has been focussed on the tall buildings in a metropolis which look

colourful and imposing but their grandeur is based on the naked and brutal exploitation of the poor and the gullible. Even the young women who live in these palatial mansions have an attraction that seems fatal to a sensitive poet. The poet’s disillusionment with such vampires has been expressed in an authentic mode

How beautiful

Is the unreal and false attraction

Of these fairy-world-like young women

Is known to us!

x x x

Familiar are we

With the prick of

These fragrant nectared

Moist flowers;

With the primeval burning of the body

Scented with the wine of lust,

How inviting

Is their bed

Is known to us!

The poet’s romantic hunger for the female flesh has been tempered by an awareness of the unpleasant reality that lies behind the painted smiles of these vamps. The poet is a keen lover but he is not unaware of the grim reality of post-independence India.

Unfettered Voice is also an important poem in which the poet wonders why he is not able to speak the truth? Who are the people who strangle him, gag him and prevent him from speaking the truth? The poet has not answered the question firmly but the very fact that he has asked the question so trenchantly makes one think and ponder :

Who keeps in check

Your consciousness?

Who has chained

Your inspirations?

Who

Strangles

Your voice?

Desired is a poem that shows the poet’s resolve to move away

from

The darkness of my mind

and

To bathe to the full

In the stream of light.

x x x

Now is the time

To bathe to the full

In the stream of light,

To get into the radiant waterfall of truth

And bathe for the rest of my life!

The image of moving from darkness to light has been a favourite image of poets right from the days of *Upanishads* to Tagore. In a way, Mahendra Bhatnagar has been not only a rebel but also inheritor of our great tradition of poetry.

Two of the most moving poems in the anthology are *Sucide* and *Torment*. In the first poem the poet has highlighted the collective suicide to which we have been inexorably committed ever since terrorists activities in Punjab and Kashmir. The poet says :

We ourselves

Are throwing hand-grenades on ourselves!

In madness

Are laying mines of fire

In our own house!

And are attacking our own people!

In the second poem the poet has described with controlled passion the terror in a modern city after men, women and children have been slashed in broad day-light :

Terror :

noiselessness

A hush spreads everywhere.

x x x

When the night ends

Nervous dogs will wail

And frightened birds will cry!

We

Bearing the pain of the wounded age

Will carry the garbage of history!

Even dogs are scared and birds are frightened in a riot-torn city. The city has not been named but where is the need? It could be Mumbai, could be Delhi or Ahmedabad for that matter.

The poet however, does not become a victim of despair. He remains a fighter, a crusader for justice in a largely unjust, immoral world. The last two poems of the anthology, *Possible - i* and *Possible - ii* are charged with hope. He says in *Possible - ii* :

Come

Let's ram in,

Ram in together!

Our lives will be made

Each needy and suffering person

Will find his feet!

I must at the end congratulate Dr. Ravi Nandan Sinha both for selecting the poems and also translating them. The translations are readable and it is gratifying to know that the language of the colonizer can be used effectively to convey the response of the colonized.

Appealing Poetry ['Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry']

– Dr. Narendra Sharma 'Kusum'

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has a large corpus of writings to his credit. His prolific literary output has a wide range. While going through his poems one cannot miss the fact that the poet is endowed with an extraordinary poetic sensibility coupled with a high degree of poetic craft. His poetry does not seem to be a laboured one : it is marvellously spontaneous. It appears to have come to him as naturally as leaves come to a tree. He exudes poetry as a flower exudes fragrance. There is an uninterrupted flow of emotions and feelings cast in an inimitable poetic mould which not only delights the reader but also enthrals him for a moment. The poems like 'To My Pen', 'Fath', 'Sing', 'Cyclical Occurrences', 'Recognise You Can't' and a few others bear out my opinion.

O Pen mine!

Move on the canvas of time

So as

Fear-lorn shredded world

Is built up anew!

x x x

O Pen mine! move -

To the asleep

Harbinger the rising sun!

And to the stranded

Make path newly lighted!

(‘To My Pen’)

Water

Water with dedication of the core within,

Maybe, breaking rocks some where

New sprouts sprang up,

The womb of earth barren

Were vibrant with life new!

Water,

Each land has warmth

Each land is issue-oriented!

(‘Faith’)

Sing, so that life a lyric became!

Sing, so that each particle a friend became!

Sing, that defeat victory become!

Sing, so that suffering a music became!

(‘Sing’)

We wished not

That sweet melodies

Of this abode

Be silenced

On this land

Some one

Poisonous seeds

Of hatred, revenge and violence

Sowed!

x x x x

But

All undesired

Went on happening before us;

And we

Could only see,

All before us

Successively

All battered, shattered, demolished!

(‘Cyclical Occurrences’)

Thus passes away life

With just

Pitiable world of

even routine, monotony!

Rare -

Music cadence

Sounds thrilling

Joy fragrant

Love rainbow-like!

(‘Recognise You Can’t’)

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has a vast canvas and as such his poetry embraces varied experiences of life marked by various moods and emotional states. He perceives life in all its facts and forms

and transforms it into a thing of beauty which is undoubtedly a joy for ever, to use the oft quoted phrase. Though unrhymed, except a few, the poems are distinguished by a natural rhythm, music and cadence. At times there is gloom, anguish and melancholy in these poems but the ultimate voice is the voice of optimism, strength, universal brotherhood, love, national fervour and humanism. He mostly uses traditional imagery but he is equally well versed in the modern poetic idiom. This gives an added dimension to his poetic art. Objectively speaking, his poetry has an enduring quality which is a rare attribute of a poet.

As to the English rendering of these poems, one may like to observe that the translators have very ably approximated to the poet's perception and its transformation into an excellent poetic form. Despite various ingrained limitations of the process of translation, the translators have successfully attempted to give us the taste of the original poems. It is needless to reiterate that all poetry defies translation because it is very hard to translate the soul. At the best we may only catch the reflection of the soul which may enable us to have a kind of vicarious experience, that too in a limited measure.

In my final estimate, I should like to observe that Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Hindi poetry deserves wide reception and audience by virtue of its intrinsic worth equally evident in its translated form in English.

THE MOTIF OF DEATH IN THE POETRY OF MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR : AN ASSESSMENT

– Dr. D. C. Chambial

Life is poised between the two antipodal points of birth and death. Where there is birth, there is death. Where one begins the other ends. Birth is welcome and rejoiced. Death is considered terrible and is, therefore, mourned. Enmeshed in the enigma of existence man has been trying since time immemorial to dive into the mysteries of life and death. All metaphysical systems of world are the outcome of man's endeavour to find truth in this regard. In the modern age of science man has toiled hard to lay bare the mystery of death. However, it still remains beyond the domain of science. Where the domain of science ends, the domain of metaphysics begins. What is outside the physical world is left for the philosophy to explain. Mahendra Bhatnagar has, in his book, '*Death-Perception : Life-Perception*', tried to perceive the mystery of life and death. In this paper my endeavour shall be to explore Mahendra Bhatnagar's views about death.

In order to answer the question : What is death? the poet has nothing to say different from the commonly held notion about it that death is 'an earthly end' and compares it to '**a horrendous night**' ('Life - Death' : 22). What the poet calls 'a horrendous night' is the state of existence after death. However, this 'horrendous night' begins with death. As the one side of a coin cannot be severed from the other, similarly, birth and death are also integral and cannot be separated : '**an unbreakable string / tied to birth**' (Ibid.) The poet declares the Vedic truth : '**Death - a truth**' (Reality' : 32). It is also the truth of existence. Where there is life, there is death.

Man, ever since he began to speculate and meditate about the fate of life after its termination on this *terra-firma*, has found death an enigma to explore. It was, and still is, an enigma for him.

There is a lot about death that one wants to know : what is death? What happens to the individual on death? If body is the dwelling of soul, as the Hinduism and most of the other world religions maintain, then, what happens to the soul on and after death? What would happen if there were no death? etc. The poet also believes in this arcane nature of death and states : **‘Death? / A question-mark!’** (Contemplation : 10). He, once again, repeats this mystery of death in his poem, ‘Conclusion’, with the same words and is staunch in his faith that man is ever engaged in unravelling and unmasking the secrets about death. He says though ‘death’, at present, is ‘a question-mark’, but a day will certainly come when **‘The mystery of death / to be unmasked ... revealed’** (‘Conclusion’ : 20)

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar, the poet, opens his discourse about death and tells the readers about its imminence. He says : **‘Death is imminent / Unavoidable’** (Gratitude’ : 2). It is very much intune with the Hindu philosophy that states : *‘Jatasya hi dhruvo mrityu ...’* (the *Ghagvadgita* : II, 27). He further expounds that death which is the end of life on the earth **‘ ... is certainly / Unavoidable!’** (Experimenting’ : 38). The fact that whosoever has life and is born on this earth is bound to decay or die. An individual’s life is limited. One cannot go beyond this limit. None can abjure the verity that one day this life on earth has to come to an end. There is no way out. The poet sings :

**One day from the body
Life-bird
will fly away,
that will
never return!
fly away!
Life-bird
will fly away!**
(‘Truth’ : 94)

Here the poet, with the help of the symbol of a bird, tries to explain that one day JIVA or PRANA will have to forsake this body. It cannot live in for good. This body is subject to the laws of destructibility and transience.

Death has never been a welcome. The very origin of death,

according to Christianity, is cruel, for it is the result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience to God : they disobeyed the God, ate the forbidden fruit and the God, in turn, not only expelled them out of Eden but also inflicted death on them. Death has been with man since his first disobedience and the original sin. The poet calls death a cruel wheel that spares no one :

**Cruel is
the wheel of death
very cruel!
Under which
Lifeless - living
Gradually grinding and changing
Every moment, every minute!
This earth rocks horribly!
invisibly / Silently
Continuously moves
This wheel of death.**

(‘The Wheel of Death’ : 6).

This wheel always goes on like the wheel of time and one and all fall prey to it without any distinction.

The termination of life from the physical body is termed as death. Death is death whatever be its kind or form. The philosopher poet, Dr. Mahendra also declares that **‘Though the end, the same death!’** (‘Forms of Death’ : 18). Nonetheless, he differentiates and recognises two kinds of death : one, natural or accidental death; two, the unnatural or suicide or murder. In this regard the poet writes : **‘Death natural / or accidental / ... / end of a conscious life’** (Ibid.) These both kinds of death, natural and accidental, are so called because they are the **‘writs of Providence’** (Ibid.) But, about the second kind, **‘suicide / or / murder’**, the poet says that it **‘isn’t death, but, a murder.’** (ibid.) Thus, the poet acknowledges two kinds of death with clear difference.

The poet is of the view that one should not fear death. While living one should be free from its fear. Living constantly under the fear of death will make the individual a coward and one will not be able to accomplish anything in one’s life. Thus the whole objective of life and living will be defeated. One is supposed to live and,

while living, do such acts that are helpful for the progress of humanity. With this motive in mind, the poet says that ‘**Fearing death / will make / living futile! / weight heavy / dry onerous / pleasureless heart.**’ (Free From Worry’ : 8). Under the constant fear of death, life loses its meaning. In order to make life meaningful one has to be free from the fear of death. So, the philosopher poet says :

**Life
only meaningful,
when every moment is free
from the dread of death.** (Ibid.)

The poet seems to echo what the Hindu philosophy says :

अशोच्यानन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।
गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥

What should not be worried about you should not worry say

the wise

Whether one lives or dies does not bother the pundit.

(the *Bhagvadgita* : II, 11).

The poet, in his poem ‘The Philosophy of Death’ (72) posits :

**Death :
When a certainty,
In vain
Why
to doubt
to fear
so much?
O, tell death —
‘Come; when you please.’**

There is no need either to nourish any doubt about death or fear it; it is imminent. In another poem, he says :

**It is preordained that
you
one day
will sleep
in the lap of death
silently!**
× × ×

in the pitch dark

of the death! (‘Preordained’ : 96)

and then talks about the destruction of the body after death by consigning it to fire : ‘**fair form / will be reduced / to ashes!**’ (Ibid.) The JIVA forsakes body; body becomes dead because it is senseless to all external stimuli of the physical world, and finally the body joins the five elements - fire, earth, water, air, and sky, the **PANCH BHUTA** — out of which it had taken shape.

All this happens, the poet argues, when body becomes unsuitable for the soul as its dwelling. Then the soul leaves it and looks for a new one that is befitting for it, The poet says :

What?

Body

Not worth living;

Therefore ...

Soul!

You left

In quest of new.’ (‘A Puzzle’ : 12)

as if the soul unfolds the secret of its leaving the body, that is death, to the poet. The poet’s philosophy seems to echo the Vedic philosophy :

वासंसि जीर्णानि यथा विहाय नवानि गृह्णाति नरोऽपराणि ।

तथा शरीराणि विहाय जीर्णान्यानि संयति नवानि देही ॥

As a man discards the old and worn out clothes,

Likewise the soul discards old body and enters new one.

(the *Bhagvadgita* : II, 22).

In the absence of death there would have no God nor the need for any such supreme divinity. The poet continues his argument that ‘**If there were no death, / God wouldn’t have any existence**’ (‘The truth’ : 14). It means that in the absence of death man would have thought himself to be the Supreme Being and the God were to be something non-existent. It is the existence of death that makes human being inferior to God and man needs some super power to attribute to that power all the enigmas of physical and metaphysical existence that are beyond the human ken. In the absence of death, even ‘**The whole philosophy / hell and heaven**’ (Ibid.) would have become redundant. But, there is death that necessitates the

existence of God, before whose will the man bows. Therefore, the man realises the ultimate truth that '*Ram nam satya hai / (God's name is the only TRUTH)*' (Ibid.) In other words, the poet contends that only God is the Reality.

It is not that death has made the existence of God feasible but it also has a purpose. The poet maintains that death is not without purpose. It also has its utilitarian value and makes life not only useful but also beautiful for existence on this earth. He posits :

**Death's made life very beautiful,
Transformes this world, in fact,
into a pleasant heaven,
We learnt the meaning of love,
only then
true's true,
Transformed man into higher beings than
immortal god!**

(*'Gratitude; Again'* : 4)

Whatever man tries to achieve in life and art is also death's gift to him; so, the poet firmly holds :

**Death's given
Beauty to life
Such
Endless - vast!
Death's given
Man
Life - art - efficiency
Such
Embellishment - adornment!**

(*'Gratitude'* : 2)

It is a fact that death has some objective. But, the poet not only encourages the mankind to shed the fear of death but also suggests to belittle death by finding a purpose of living because :

**We
who are the artisans of life
should talk only about life
discover
the meaningfulness of life.
and know**

about the essence of life.

(*'Purpose'* : 56)

His panacea for belittling death is :

**If death
destroys us
let us
strike back at it.** (Ibid.)

But, how can we strike back at death? The poet has himself answered this question successfully in the poem itself that it can be done by discovering 'the meaningfulness of life' and by singing 'the glory of life' (Ibid.) The 'meaningfulness of life' suggests a purposeful life so that he is remembered even after he is dead.

Death is imminent. It cannot be avoided. It is the fate of all living beings on this earth. It can only be relegated to pettiness. Then there is no need to fear death : '**let human self / not be terrorized / of death care**' (*'A Wish'* : 58). The living ones should always be ready to welcome death. There is no alternative to it. Therefore, the poet has debunked death of all its power and fear and welcomes death to

**come,
do come one day!
And take me away
in your flying-chariot
away ... far away** (*'An Invitation'* : 74).

perhaps, like the persona in Emily Dickinson's poem, 'The Chariot'¹

To conclude our discussion, we can say that the poet comes out with some very concrete suggestions to tear off the hitherto much significance attached to death. He does not believe in any type of ritual, because these do not form part of the eternal truth; these have been devised and followed by the survivors. He exhorts the mankind : 'Let the last act be / free from rituals' (*'The Last Will'* : 110). What is more important, in order to find the ultimate truth, to unmask the enigma of death shrouded in the mystery, is to approach the hitherto unsolved riddle of death single-mindedly. For this he suggests : '**let mind be set / only on the mystery beyond death!**' (Ibid.) He also consoles those who are left behind wailing

and bemoaning in these words : ‘End - / a sign of perfection, / a successful stage / why to bewail’ and should

**follow in the footsteps
of the departed
to attain the meaning of life
glorify it.**

(‘Kritkarma’ : 112).

It is ‘the meaning of life’ that has not been found yet and the quest for which is ever going on like the journey of life as propounded by Aurobindo Ghose². Mahendra Bhatnagar, the poet and philosopher, has very deeply studied and experienced, in his imagination, the concept of death and has made some very radical observations that make him stand all alone as a sedate thinker in the contemporary poetry.

Notes :

(1) In the Dickinson’s poem, Death is one of the occupants in the chariot. Death asks the poetess / persona to accompany him. The opening lines of the poem are :

**Because I could not stop for death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And immortality.**

In Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poem, the poet / persona invites Death to take him / her with himself, because he is not afraid of death and ready to go with him.

(2) In his poem, ‘Is This the End?’, Aurobindo Ghose says that death does not put an end to the journey or quest of life. The poet refers to soul that is immortal and continues its journey ceaselessly. It goes on even after the goal has been achieved. The last two stanzas of them poem, that have relevance to the argument in the present article, are :

**The Immortal in the mortal is his name;
An artist Godhead here
Ever remoulds himself in dimmer shapes,
Unwilling the cease.
Till all is done for which the stars were made,
Till the heart discovers God
And the soul knows itself. And even then
There is no end.**

Death-Perception : Life-Perception

— Mrs. Purnima Ray

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar’s ‘**Death-Perception : Life-Perception**’ is a collection of fifty beautiful poems translated from original Hindi into English by Dr. D.C.Chambial. The poet, and the translator are already well-known figures in the literary arena, both in India and abroad. The Appendix 1&2 published in this book help us to know their achievements in detail. In short, their bio-notes are as follows -

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a leading Professor of Hindi Language and Literature, guides scholars, has several published books, and received many awards. His major poetry-collections include ‘**Forty Poems**’ translated by Shree Amir Mohammad Khan, and Prof. L.S.Sharma, ‘**After The Forty Poems**’ translated by Dr. Ramsevak Singh Yadav, Prof. Vareendra Kumar Verma, and Shree Amir Mohammad Khan, ‘**Exuberance and other poems**’, translated by Dr. Ravinandan Sinha, and ‘**Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar’s Poetry**’ translated by Dr. H.C.Gupta.

Dr. D.C.Chambial is a Professor of English, a widely published Indo-English poet and critic, has several published books, poetry collections, and on criticism, and edits an international journal ‘**Poetcrit**’

At the outset the translator in his note makes clear to us the most important features of Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poetry, which we have to recho in our discussion from time to time in our own way. And we will see that Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poems are deep, intense in feeling, suggestive and thought-provoking.

The title of this present collection is very important. One should notice that ‘Death-Perception’ comes first, then ‘Life Perception’. The ‘Death-theme’ is a very common and universal one, but the fact is that we sometimes are aware of it, and sometimes not. Most of us know that it is inevitable and certain, and we are eager to know more about it, and want to escape from its clutches, but we do not know how to do it. It is here the utility of Mahendra

Bhatnagar's poems on this subject. He explores all the possible ways with his extraordinary creative spirit, and he succeeds to satisfy our quench for the thirst of knowledge of this kind.

Poet Mahendra points us to see the fact that we are standing on the backbone of 'Death', so that our desire for life is being stirred again and again :

**Death is;
Death is imminent,
Unavoidable —
That's why
Life is so desired!**

Although we get scared by it every now and then, yet it is acceptable, and for that 'life' itself is grateful to 'Death' :

**Death element / feeling
Minute by minute death-tension
Are acceptable,
Gratitude
To Death
Life's gratitude!**

Because Death's contributions to Life are unnumbered :

**Death's made life
very beautiful,
Transformed this world,
in fact,
into a pleasant heaven,
We learnt
the meaning of love ...**

and the most important achievement of 'Death' is that it

**...Transformed man
into higher beings
than immortal god!**

This poet has seen 'Death' in the best possible ways, yet he admits the impossibility to define it :

**All efforts futile -
to explicate
the meaning of death;
it's very intricate difficult
to contemplate.**

He does not ignore its dark sides :

**Cruel is
The wheel of death
very cruel!**

He defines finely in a word :

.. A wonderful puzzle!

Poet Mahendra can establish a truth that man's all philosophy including the idea of God revolves round 'Death' :

**If there were no death,
God wouldn't have any existence,
man
would have never reconciled
with his fate!**

For he is always led by this fact :

... 'Death is imminent'!

So his idea of God is nothing but :

**... a proof
of man's helplessness
of readiness after death ...**

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar equates the relation between Life and death through a fine imagery :

**Death :
An unbreakable string
Tied to birth ..**

So he rightly poses the stoic question :

**... Birth
why a jubilation?**

**Death :
pain ..!
why?**

**Birth-death
when equal?**

He can justify what he says regarding this by a logical fallacy :

**Morning is red
Evening is red
Morning - evening are one.**

**Wail on birth
Wail on death
Birth-death are one ...**

It seems that he wants to say as one cannot detach death from life, similarly life cannot be detached from death :

**Death -
a birth
Over and over again
of soul ...**

Like the ancient Greek philosophers the poet says :
... this manifest world is the only truth ...

Yet he confirms :

Death - a truth

Life - a truth

The poet gives us the key-principle to overcome death :

**... Everytime
Continuous struggle
With the eternal challenge
of death is welcome!
He will be
A *mriyunjaya*; he will be!**

At the same time he makes us aware of meaningfulness of life :

**Mere living
isn't a proof of
life's meaningfulness ...**

and his 'meaningfulness' finds its expression in humanistic approach to life :

**Let selflessness
be the motive of our living,
let's devour materialistic hurdles
on every step.
Let's acquire / such capabilities,
then
life may be
dedicated to death ...**

So in 'Prayer' poet Bhatnagar does not want any ascetic attainment, but leads the mankind in time of need :

**I long
not for immortality,
I long for
youthfulness.**

**Perfect health, diseaselessness,
absolute peace
of human mind and body ...
He shows us where 'death' takes place :
Shattered and disorderly life
malady-stricken / frustrated wounded life
momentary
eager to fall into**

the death-pool!

and the victory of life over death :

Have faith

Life

**will be victorious,
fear not the wicked,
fear not!**

Like a Miltonic hero the poet discloses the way :

**If death destroys us
let us**

strike back at it,

Let us

**sing the glory of life,
let us**

**strike a severe blow at
Yama, death!**

Here also revolution takes place, one has to utter these

words:

**That I may
unite all those
living in hell,
urge on them
for a revolt,
prepare them
for a change in life!**

It is only then we can realise what he says :

With a wish to live

**one won't
wait for death!**

He does not want the Epicurean way of living be termed as 'true-living' :

**Live / by thinking self
immortal,
laugh and sing
without any concern,
eat and drink
without any worry;
should it / be termed / true living?**

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar sings paeon of life, but there is something more special in his singing :

**I sing
about the triumph of life
over death!**

Like post-Tagorean Bengali surrealist poet Jibanananda Das he admires the wealth of life :

**I sing dauntlessly
the triumph of thr life-bud
of the deaest thing!
I sing again and again!**

One may compare the words 'again and again' quoted above with Jibananada's *abar asiba phire* (I will come again). The words which poet Bhatnagar used are different, but the total effect is the same :

**The sounds that echo
in the sky of graveyard
of the liberated-selves of carefree birds
are translations
of my life sentiments!
The compatriots
of my life - adorations!**

Here he establishes one truth that poets from ages to ages sing life in there unique ways.

Perhaps for that reason poet Bhatnagar can romanticize 'Death' :

(1) You'll come —

**On tip-toes,
Surprising
Like a clever girl.
Alright,
Accepted!**

**My beloved,
your this game
is welcome**

**(2) You beautiful like the moon,
from the opposite window
peep out
evaluate —**

One should notice that the poet attaches feminity to a beautiful object.

Poet Bhatnagar's creativity finds its fullest expression when he uses the word 'passing away' instead of 'death' :

**Death might be overtaking
while dreaming,
Prana
might be out from the body
just then.**

**A dreaming man
passes away!**

Yes, the dreaming people are active and creative, they dream before turning themselves into creativity, as Lord Vishnu sleeps and dreams before the creation of the Universe; they do not know the word 'death' while engrossing in their way of life. The last lines of this poem makes us thoughtful, leave us in a whirlpool of suggestions :

**What does he know?
Ask those living
who
have covered the dead body
with a sheet of cloth!**

**What happened?
What happened?
At last?**

It seems that poet Bhatnagar accepts indirectly the will of

God behind death :

**It is preordained that
you
one day
will sleep
in the lap of death
silently!**

So he says to himself and at the same time to us to re-
nounce all earthly attachments :

**Never
Remember,
Even today
Listen,
Do not light the memory-lamp!**

He does not forget to remind us the most precious things
of life, and he puts all this so masterly in the tounge of a dying-
person :

**Adieu!
O the springs of the world
Adieu!
O, the shining moon
The twinkling bright stars
Adieu!
Hills valleys
Slopes ... marshes
Adieu!
O, the high waves of the sea!**

In a way, he values most the Nature surrounding us, as
Mrityunjaya in Rabindranath Tagore's short-story 'The Hidden
Treasure' exclaimed : "I want sunlight, air, sky" etc. wanting to
live.

For he knows that ultimate truth is, he makes a goodbye to
an illusory world behind him.:

**Fluttering
wings of illusion,
Eyes
Profuse with love
Adieu!**

**The strings of
An inextricable knot
The unrealised hopes
Adieu!
Adieu!**

'An Ascetic' is an important poem, in the sense that the
poet gives here a message to the strife - torn world we are living
in :

**He who sings
songs of life
at the edge of doom,
one day -
he will attain
an immortal place
by changing his shape,
Preserve this / heritage /
by making it a *stupa*.**

The suggestion is if we sing songs of life, then there should
be no hankering after life-killing desires and efforts; again the poet's
spirituality lies in humanity, and man's religion in his '*Kritakarma*'.
The poem 'The Last Will' can be seen as his consolation for us as
well as a clarion call :

**let mind be set
only on the mystery beyond death!**
× × × ×
**Let refinement of worship be
in the splendour of knowledge ..**

Here he gives more emphasis on 'mind' which controls all
body-organs, and on 'knowledge', the purest of all things in the
world, as we find in *The Srimat Bhagavat Gita*.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is, no doubt, an avant-garde In-
dian poet. Dr. D.C.Chambial excellent rendition extends the read-
ership of Dr. Bhatnagar's philosophy and poetic ability. Dr.
Chambial has done his job well, for his transcreation has retained
all the literary qualities of the original poems - e.g. 'the economy
of linguistic expressions', lucidity etc.



Death-Perception : Life-Perception An Analytical Study

— Dr (Mrs) Jaya Lakshmi Rao V.

DEATH PERCEPTION - LIFE PERCEPTION is a sensitively rendered volume of 50 poems, originally written in Hindi. The poems retain their natural flavour to a great extent, thanks to the versatility of the well-known poet of national and international fame Dr D.C. Chambial. As the title indicates the mysterious entity of death and the magical polarity called life occupy the mind and art of Dr Mahendra Bhatnagar. The theme of death and life has ever been source of deep contemplation often verging on to obsession for creative writers from times immemorial. Yet it never lost its freshness and vigour due to the mystery that surrounds it, the magnetism it generates and the manifold wonder it evokes. Dr Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry bears witness to all the above observations.

Dr Chambial kept the translation as close as the linguistic boundaries between the original Hindi and the foreign English languages have allowed. Praise is to him, who, despite the language constrictions was able to carry and convey the poetic preoccupations of the well known Hindi Poet with life and death.

The volume begins with a difference. In the first poem 'Gratitude', the poet gleams a reason to be grateful to death. It certainly is a new perception. The poet says: "*Death's given / Man / Life-artefficiency / Such / Embellishment - adornment.*" According to the poet it is death that makes life beautiful and therefore desirable. Death's imminence makes life all the more attractive. So, he offers "*Gratitude / To death / Life's gratitude.*" The fact that death equals all is mourned in a poem entitled 'The Wheel of Death / Time'. Death tramples the white radiance of life. Death is relent-

less, inexorable: "*Before it! Stability has! No existence! Its motion! Always controls! Life and death! Earth and sky.*"

Dr Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems are not for those who seek the romantic, who look for the sensational. They do not jingle either. There is evidently a deep contemplation, a firm conviction in his poems. Written in free verse, some of the lines remain clearly etched in the reader's mind. Lines such as: "*Invisibly / Silently / Continuously moves / This wheel of death / Uninterrupted... unchanged!*" make a mark because in spite of simple terminology the poet has used memorable imagery. When he captions a poem as 'Wheel of Time' (*kaal chakra*), the poet is using a native metaphor. In the cultures of India time is compared to a wheel, a wheel that is conceptualized with the elements of birth-growth (life) - death that repeat themselves ceaselessly. It is a cyclic process that is inevitable and unavoidable. So, says the poet why grieve over death and spoil one's peace of mind? —"*Life! only meaningful, / When every moment is free / From the dread of death.*" Despite the scientific advancement, death is a 'wonderful puzzle' for the poet. He sees death as a conundrum in poems such as 'Contemplation' and 'A Puzzle'. It is the fear of death that urges man to take "*refuge! In God! For eternal peace.*" Yet the poet firmly believes that man's invincibility will make him see "*The mystery of death / To be unmasked... revealed / Sure... some day*" in 'Conclusion'.

In poems such as 'Life-Death' and 'The Opposite' the dividing line between the polarities of life and death are brought to focus. To the poet they are not separate but intrinsically interconnected. One cannot be without the other. They are the beginning and end of a unique cycle. Why then are feelings generated by then different? questions the poet. "*Birth : Why a jubilation? / Death : Pain...? Why?*" the ironical fact however is, "Wail on birth! Wail on death! Birth-death are one." ('Equal') According to the poet it is futile to think of Hell or Heaven. Suffice to know that "*This manifest world the only truth / Death - a truth, / Life - a truth!*" The common everyday thought of life and death attains a special significance in the poems of Dr Mahendra Bhatnagar because of the complexity of human emotion and intellectual activity. Although the theme of death is glaring enough, we are especially

made to take notice of it due to the rhythm the poet used. It successfully indicates the relative value of his individualized perception. For example in a poem entitled 'The Philosophy of life' the poet says that life is "*External motion / Physical vibration / Internal motion - / Life*. Real death is to lose 'internal' motion, the spiritual death. Now we know where the 'fuse' lies. The poetic thought continues on to 'Excelsior'. If - "*Struggles and strifes / lead to life*" then "*to be inactive*" is "*an indication - of the approaching death, / to stop - the end of life.*"

Here is a rediscovery of the Vedic observation that our life is a pilgrimage and that man is an eternal traveler on the move. Life is an adventure. There is no resting on the journey and there is no end to it either. In the Aitereya Brhmana there is hymn, which ends with the refrain : 'Charaiveti, Charaiveti' which means "Hence O traveler, march along, march along." One finds an echo in "*Excelsior excelsior!*"

Now that we do not have a key to the puzzle of death why not we unravel the 'mysteries of life' which in turn equips us with the ability 'to talk to the moon and to the stars' thus achieving 'meaningfulness' of life. In other words the poet exhorts us to keep in touch with the unseen presence of the cosmic power by its physical manifestation in various forms of nature. True, nature is our guide, friend and philosopher. It gives according to the poet "*Perfect peace of mind / ... a new meaning to life.*"

'A Prayer' is an insightful poem on the secret of leading a happy life. In the poet's opinion happy life is an outcome of selfachievement. He says: "*We live for / 125 years*" **only when we have a "Body free from pain / Mind free from torture."** So that we live as much for 'ourselves' as of 'others' because according to the Indian thought the whole world is a family - *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The foregone thought is entirely in opposition with the feeling that "*Blind, perplexed, ignorant / Man .. construes money to be supreme / Thinks pleasure all in all.*" ('A Mirage') In 'A Vow' the poet depicts death as an adversary whom we the human race fight like soldiers because life is too precious to lose to "*a deceitful trick of / Any adversary!*"

'A Call' is a unique poem in which the poet uses a number

of sensory images to celebrate the carnival of life. In a Tagore-like lyricism, the poet hails the singers of *Alakh* and *Sohar* who play on 'every string of the violin of heart'. Their songs are mainly meant for the 'mentally vanquished', to awaken those whose life turned into 'stupor'. A number of poems expound the value attached to life, a rare gift. Poems such as 'One day', 'Proved', 'A Healthy Vision', and 'Compatibility' sing of *Shanti* (peace), victory, glory and pleasure of life. He envisages life wherein all will laugh and be merry. Death is compared to a terrorist in the poem 'Dreadful' who "*remote controls*" life - "*By hiding / In invisible places.*"

In 'The Philosophy of Death', 'An Invitation', 'To the Fairy of Death' and 'A Request' there is a new challenge, a new welcome to a hail-fellow-well-met attitude to death. There is neither fear nor fascination towards humanity's foe i.e. death. But one finds camaraderie, bonhomie, open and candid. Death is treated as a friend, "*a clever girl*", "*a cohabiter*" and "*a neighbour.*" Thus we witness a metamorphosis in the poet's notion of death as it passes from the stage of being the fearful and the awe-inspiring to that of a much-awaited welcome guest. Finally an agreeable compromise is reached. Peace at last! The pilgrim realizes his futile fencing with an invincible enemy. What cannot be cured must be endured. This endurance is not born of frustration but out of wise realization. that makes a world of difference.

In 'Comparison' the poet juxtaposes *Shiva*, the three-eyed God head with *shava*, the lifeless body. A single vowel shift from 'i' to 'a' brings in an irreplaceable difference in consciousness i.e. from *spandana* to *jada*. 'A Blow' shows the futility of involvement because says the poet: "**Early or late / all / in an eternal sleep have to fall / dust unto dust!**" thus after being enlightened that every one "**One day / renouncing name and fair form / will be reduced / to ashes!**" ('Preordained'), the poet proclaims in 'Proclamation': "**0 Death / I do accept you. . / I go / For good. .. for good / I go!**"

Now there is loveliness all around. Nothing but peace remains. Not, that which is a result of impotent stupor but the peace one arrives at after experiencing the vicissitudes of life, like the peace one finds in Eliot's *Waste Land*, which is the result

of understanding the human world. Now the poet avers: *“Mahendra Bhatnagar sleeps / . . .an eternal sleep.”* He desires *“I lose my identity / By fusing with the particles / of this soil! / I sow new life!”*

Like Euripides of yore, the poet also sees wisdom of attaining peace in keeping one’s self above hate, and in being good. He bows out of the stage of life in *‘I Bow Thee’* seeking release from good as well as bad. After going through the purging experiences of life, wisdom dawns on the traveller, which we witness in *‘An Ascetic’*. The poet is Siddharth with a wish to remain immortal. He attains it by singing songs of heavenly bliss he *“wasn’t trapped”* in *“Yama’s region”* any more. Fittingly enough his *‘Last Will’* is not to follow *“established systems”* but to follow *“good faith and good feelings!”* in the last of the collected poems *‘Kritkarma’* the poet depicts the man who does duty successfully, whose end is a “sign of perfection”. There is no room for regrets in such a life. It is a life which is a “circle of light” encompassing the whole universe, forever glowing, forever guiding those groping in the darkness of ignorance.

This commendable collection merits praise on its linguistic novelty too. It is a well-known fact that the world view of the speaker of one language is entirely different from that of the another. A person’s cultural background and understanding, religion and environment play an enormous role in the shaping of his imagination, and expression. Yet owing to the fact that human feelings and sensibility are much the same throughout the living world, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poems appeal to all, to the speakers of both English and Hindi. Myth and metaphor lend strength and character to the poems. The poet has his own intensities, pauses and quiet places. Yet there is nothing vague or confusing. The rhythm follows the poet’s thought and emotion. We should not forget the flexibility of the living language in which the poems were originally rendered. In good poetry, says a famous critic *“the sounds of words, the suggestiveness of simple words and of word sequences are linked organically with the rhythm”*, as for example, in *‘A Call’*:

“Jump / Into the live seal O life / 0 divers/ stir the stupor!”

The sea of life can be a mere amorphous mass if it is not made to yield the treasure of wisdom by thinkers and visionaries. Note the imagery and force of rhythm in it. Look at the colour of imagery the poet uses to bring out the facets of life in *‘A Pair’* : **“Sandy desert spreads / All around / Like the dying lamp-flame / Brown / Yellow / Palish-green ... / Slipping age / At the verge of death!”**

In good poetry one finds *“clear and vivid utterance to most subtle and ambiguous feelings and it is the union of clearness of vision and profound ambiguity of the poet’s attitude that gives the poem its power.”* This observation is true of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar’s poesy. To cite an example from *‘A Proclamation’* : **“I sleep / on the comfortable / soil-bed! / I lose my identity / By fusing with the particles / of this soil!”** The vision is fired with the thought, which in turn is implied in the images of *‘comfortable soil bed’* *‘sleep’* and *‘particles of the soil’*. In spite of being personalized, the poems appeal to all, mainly because of the broadness of the theme, the poet has chosen. The duplicity of human behaviour is diagonally opposed to the brutal frankness of death, the inevitable and logical end of the drama of life. attaining peace in keeping one’s self above hate, and in being good. In addition to a lasting theme, economy of words, effective imagery and haunting word music, the poems of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar collected under the title *Death-perception : Life-Perception* impress the readers also on account of attractive graphics and special spacing and a symbolic cover design.

'Death' in the Poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar
— *Prof. D. Murali Manohar*

The word 'death' is so intimate and at the same time it intimidates every human being. Even if some one were to say that he/she is not apprehensive to death, I don't agree with that person be him/her a spiritual person or a materialistic person. Every one is panic of death internally and externally, implicitly and explicitly. Philosophers of Greece, Buddhist and Indian may have discussed on the issue of death.

However, I would like to say that I have been impressed by Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's dealing with the issue of death in his poetry originally written in Hindi and also the translator Dr. D.C. Chambial who has translated the poems into English. I am not an authentic person to comment on translation work, however, the translator seems to be clear, intelligible, retaining the originality and above all making sense with the poet's profound ideas. When everyone knows that 'death' is inevitable, why should one be apprehensive about it? What happens if one has fear of death? Mahendra Bhatnagar says :

**Fearing death
will make
living
futile!
Weight heavy
dry onerous
pleasureless heart.**

If one is preoccupied and obsessed with the fear of death, then he/she will have a miserable life. The living itself becomes futile. He further says that life is meaningful only **"when every moment is / free from dread of death."**

Some of us fear about death and some of us contemplate death. Is one successful in contemplating what is death? According to Mahendra Bhatnagar :

**Death ?
A question-mark!
To know the mystery
not only difficult
but also
all unknown for man.**

Several people have tried to know the mystery of death, however, it has been very difficult to know what it is. It is quite interesting to see the combination of death and God. As one cannot predict how the death embraces a human being, the human being has started believing in God. The feeling is that if one believes in god, the god can give strength to lead a life without apprehension, fear and panic of death. Thus man has started believing in God. As a result Mahendra Bhatnagar in his poem 'The Truth' he says :

**If there were no death,
God wouldn't have any existence;
man
would have never reconciled
with his fate!**

The poet seems to suggest that the existence of God and faith prevail, motivate, come into being, enter, only because of the 'death' to human beings. The words 'death' and 'faith' are interrelated. The death of a human being links with the fate. If one were to die in an accident, due to ill health, after a long illness, death-in-life, he/she is associated with the 'fate'. It is because of his/her fate so and so has been dead in an accident, suffers with ill health and does not die early; some people neither die nor recover from the disease/illness and the feeling develops that it is better to die rather than suffer this way; some people lead a life which is almost like a death.

After having expressed his feeling on living the life with fear is a futile, contemplating of death, existence of god arising due to the concept of death, now he turns to the forms of death. Some of the forms of death here he talks about in the poem entitled 'Forms of Death' :

**But
an act of terminating life**

by suicide
 or
 by murder
 or destruction of the ferocious
 in self or social defence,
 Isn't a death,
 but, a murder.
 Though the end, the same
 death!
 True death or untimely death.

While talking of forms of death, he is interested in pointing out the difference between 'death' and 'murder'. Ultimately both of them lead to the end of life of a human being. In what way the person's life ends, that is a different matter. In other words the poet wants to show the difference between 'true death' or 'Ultimate death' with that of 'suicide/murder'. He seems to suggest that 'true death' is a natural process unlike suicide or murder. Whether one faces hardship in any form or not, one has to face a true death. Though the end of a human life is same but there is a difference in true death and suicide/murder. In other words the poet seems to be in favour of true death rather than in the other forms of death. After the forms of death, he moves on to the two extremes of human life. If one extreme is life, the other extreme is death thus the title of the poem is 'Life-Death'. The poet has deeply thought about life and death, the two extremes, and has expressed them in the poem and I would like to show in the following table :

<u>Birth</u>	<u>Death</u>
one end	the other extreme end
a shore	an opposite bank
Why a jubliation?	Pain! Why?
Well shaped	completely invisible!
known	unknown!
Beginning	end
initiation	an earthly end!
yes, a being	ah! a non-being!
a new dawn	a horrendous night!

To continue with the extremes, the poet goes on to dwell with the ideas in yet another poem entitled 'Experimenting' with the

life, he says :

In man
Wish for life -
Eternal and strongest,
Whereas
The final truth
About every life
Is death!
Yes, end is certainly,
Unavoidable!

Whatever may be the truth of one's own life, the man always tries to lead and live his life with utmost wish to live 'eternally' and 'strongly'. He/she knows the ultimate truth of one's own life is 'death'. The human being tends to forget the 'truth' of life. The end of human life is 'certain' and 'unavoidable'. However, the experience of the life is that :

... it is also true -
impatient passion for
Immortality and youth
Will never wane,
Man's queer valour
Longs for melody,
Not for tears!

In spite of knowing that one has to end up his/her life surrendering to the death in whatsoever form it may be, yet we have impatient passion for 'immortality' and 'youth' which will never be successful. The poet also says that man's queer valour longs for a melody but not for tears. Not only that there are few people who :

Every time
Continuous struggle
With the eternal challenge
of death is welcome!
He will be
A mrityunjaya; he will be!

The bold, the brave people always struggle continuously with the eternal challenge, the death. The poet welcomes such people. Generally people are afraid of death. They don't even talk of it. Even if some one were to talk, they are found fault with talking in such a

manner. Those who challenge and fight the death are considered as 'mrityunjayas'. Some people escape the death very closely and narrowly. Such people are also called mrityunjayas. Mrityunjaya can be seen from accidents, drowning, falling from heights and speeds and fire, to mention only a few.

If some people experiment with life. the other people try to find a meaning in the existence of life. The poet in his poem entitled 'Meaningfulness' the poet says that :

**Mere living
isn't a proof of
life's meaningfulness,
Living -
only helplessness
like death - an exit.**

Any human being irrespective of his caste, religion, creed, colour, social status, rich and poor has his/her own life. Can every human being lead a life with meaningfulness? There are human beings who have a mere living without any undertaking of any kind of social activity in their lives. One can't say that so and so has lived which is a proof for life meaningfulness. He further says what he means by meaningfulness of living a human life. In the same poem he says :

**Declaration of
human glory only when
there is perfect peace of mind -
when we give
a new meaning to life,
in pitch dark
open doors
to a world full of lights.**

The only reason Mahendra Bhatnagar seems to have a meaning to life is to have a 'perfect peace of mind'. If a human being has this perfect peace of mind then he can declare that it is a human glory. The peace of mind also results in opening doors to a world full of lights from the life of pitch dark. The poet also says that life shall have selflessness and dedicate one's life to death. The lines go thus :

**Let selflessness
be the motive of our living,
let's devour materialistic hurdles
at every step.**

**Let's acquire
such capabilities,
then
life may be
dedicated to death.**

**No regret,
no sorrow.**

The poet seems to suggest that the life of human being is to be led with selflessness and dedicate the life to death. The motive of human life is to be selflessness but not selfishness. It is easy to preach but it is very difficult to practice. However, this is a challenge to human life. Moreover, he also asks the human beings to devour materialistic hurdles to lead a life of selflessness. The selfishness arises when one is running after materialistic things. He ought to become selfish if he is running after the materialistic things. One can't be selflessness if one is after the materialistic things. If one were to lead a selflessness life, one has to devour materialistic things and hurdles at every step. This phrase 'every step' is very crucial here. While one is trying to achieve selflessness life at every step, one is lured, tempted, influenced, biased by materialistic hurdles. One has to overcome these hurdles at every step. It is not impossible, however, it is extremely difficult. Thus the poet is pleading one and all saying that 'let's acquire such capabilities'. If we acquire such capabilities of selflessness, devour materialistic hurdles then the life may be dedicated to death. One will have no hesitation in dedicating life to death. He/She will be very happy to surrender to death and will have 'no regrets' and 'no sorrow'. In other words the life will have fulfilled all the requirements and he/she will have unparalleled happiness even after his/her death. After talking of selflessness, the poet now talks about the self-willed persons in the poem entitled 'A Mirage'. He says :

Self-willed and ambitious

**man
runs after money
after pleasures
at the cost of life.**

Unlike selflessness persons, self willed and ambitious people run after money. Their whole and sole aim is to earn money as much as they want. They go to any extent in order to earn money. Ambitious people like Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* goes to the extent of killing his own uncle in order to attain the throne. This is one of the best examples of ambitious persons. These people run after money and pleasure at the cost of their own lives. They do not realize that they are taking the risk of their lives themselves. Thus the poet says : **'How strange / at this queer, dirty intention!'** This is absolute strange and the dirty intention of people who run after money and pleasure. He calls such a man :

**Blind, perplexed, ignorant
Man
Construes money to be supreme
Think pleasure all in all!
He'll spoil / the precious life,
And will lose life / the gift of God!**

The ambitious people naturally become 'blind', 'perplexed' and also 'ignorant' in order to achieve their goals. They consider money as supreme. It is a known fact that money is not everything. Money is not supreme. There are several things apart from money in life. They think money provides pleasure. They forget that the same money can spoil the precious life. This precious life is lost due to longing for money pleasures. It is a gift of god that is lost. Instead of running after the money and pleasure let the man accept the inevitable thing of one's own life that is death, The poet in his poem entitled 'The Philosophy of Death' says :

**Death ;
When a certainty,
In vain
Why to doubt,
to fear so much!
O, tell death -**

'Come; when you please.'

He talks about the philosophy of human being. Death is a certainty in any human's life. Why should one be in vain to doubt and to fear so much of death? It is an ultimate end. There is no doubt about it. Moreover, he welcomes death whenever it pleases. He is showing his maturity and crystal clear truth on human life. After welcoming death, the poet expresses his readiness to face death in his poem entitled 'To the Fairy of Death' :

**O death, come
I am ready!
Never think,
I am helpless.
You will come -
On tip-toes
Surprising
Like a clever girl.**

**Alright,
Accepted!
My beloved
Your this game
Is welcome!
Come quietly
Come. O death
I'm ready!**

He is convinced about death, thus, he says all right and accepted. He is ever ready to face death. He even considers death as his beloved. At the same time he calls the death as a game player. He welcomes this game and expresses his readiness to face death. After expressing his readiness to face death, he poses an important and pertinent question of believing in god when there is no guarantee of escaping death. He says :

**Life-bird!
will fly,
fly away!
Life-bird will fly away!
Why you try so hard,
sing hymns every morn and eve,**

**nothing is in your control
you bow in every temple ...**

He uses the bird imagery for life. When he says life bird will fly away he means to say that life of human being ends with the death. When that is so why human beings try so hard to retain their lives? In order to safeguard their lives. He further points out that nothing is in human's control with regard to death. Although one prays and bows in temple one cannot control his/her death with morning and evening prayers. Whether one prays or not, life will fly away.

However, after questioning the people who have faith in god, ultimately he makes his last salute to death in his last poem of this book entitled 'Kritkarma' :

**Let us
follow in the footsteps
of the departed
to attain the meaning of life,
glorify it.**

Take the last salute!

The poet at last acknowledges and requests the humanity to follow the footsteps of the departed humans in order to attain the meaning of life. Moreover, we have to glorify the life by accepting the death and offering a last salute to death.

All in all what the poet is trying to do in his poetry with regard to death is that one has to be bold in accepting the ultimate truth of death with out fear, not to try to chase the mystery of death, believe in god, believe in natural process of death rather than in murder or in committing suicide, realize the difference between life and death, not to question and long for immortality, some may fight with death and become mrityunjaya for a period of time, however, on one or the other day he/she has to face death, pleading to lead a meaningfulness and selflessness lives, never run after money with materialistic comforts and death is certain to all human beings; and be ready for it and make a last salute to death.

●

'Death-perception : Life-Perception'

Revealing Reflections on Life and Death

— *Dr. Atma Ram*

Life and death have been a great enigma and mystery for man from time immemorial. Right from the earliest time he has been interested in understanding his existence on the earth as also his departure from here for good. An area of ceaseless adventure and exploration for mystics and common persons — since the two are basic and essential for all.

In '*Death-Perception : Life-Perception*', Mahendra Bhatnagar, a veteran academic and mature poet reflects on various aspects of life and death. The anthology comprises 50 poems. As the very titles suggest — 'The Wheel of Life', 'Free from Worry', 'Contemplation', 'Reality', 'The Opposite', 'Life-Death', 'A Mirage', 'A Vow', 'A Call', 'Purpose', 'A Wish', 'A Longing', 'Dreadful', 'The Mode of Death', 'Good-Bye' — to mention a few — Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar recollects or recreates various moods, scenes, sights of life and death in a simple and poetic ways and conveys to the readers their meaning and worth — in his own way, he tries to unravel the enigma of life and death. He begins with a happy note, reveals the struggle and strife, and finely ends with poems of hope and optimism. And more importantly, perceptions of death meaningfully point to perceptions of life. He urges the reader to voluntarily take the last salute, as life has to be lived :

**"The end of life —
A stage
Why to bewail?
Let us
follow in the footsteps
of the departed
to attain the meaning of life,
glorify it.**

Take the last salute!" ('Kritkarma')

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar tries to understand death in relation to life, and life with reference death. Hence the apt title — 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception', the use of a colon in-between; the abundant use of signs of exclamation and interrogation in the entire volume. The 'collection' characteristically begins with 'Gratitude', and 'Gratitude : Again'. Says the poet :

**"Death is;
Death is imminent,
Unavoidable —
That's why
Life is so desired!
That's why
There's such a semblance
Between life and death!"** ('Gratitude')

So he has no fear, like say, Keats, when he thinks about his final exit. Death seems to impart beauty and relevance to life. He asserts :

**"Death's made life
very beautiful,
Transformed this world
in fact,
into a pleasant heaven."** ('Gratitude : Again')

He holds that life is not mere living. It should constitute a positive, forward outlook to go in for sweetness and light.

**"When we give
a new meaning to life."** (Meaningfulness')

Indeed, Dr. Bhatnagar presents in these short songs numerous worthwhile perspectives on life and death, in a style marked by pace, precision and simplicity. He prays for a long, active life dedicated to the welfare of all :

**"Yes,
May
We live for
125 years!
For ourselves,
for others."** ('A Prayer')

As often said, it matters not how one dies, what matters is

how one lives. Dr. Bhatnagar thus, wants to live meaningfully with zest and zeal, and finally leave the world silently and peacefully — in a way, to make the best of both the worlds. He implies that death is welcome since it is inevitable, life should invariably be led without any fear or doubt, since what is, is. The poet is naturally prepared to embrace both of them. And as the time comes, he contentedly calls it a day, bids a happy good-bye to life :

**"Adieu!
O the springs of the world
Adieu!
O, the shining moon
The twinkling bright stars
Adieu!"** ('I Bow Thee')

It is a somewhat new kind of approach to life as to death. In general, poets tell about joys and sorrows of life as fears and darkness of death. Or they adopt a philosophical view to delve deep into the labyrinth to extract some viable pattern. But Mahendra's treatment of life and death is unique — he dwells on the usefulness of both and trusts most his own vision and experience. The English-knowing world may find his point of view interesting and enjoyable. No intricacies or complexities referred to; no fear or obscurity to obsess one with. Direct and simple poetic observations, embracing both life and death as they come. The poet knows and knows what he knows — so he is wise and heart-whole. He accepts facts, ripeness is all. And his last will is at once relevant to one and all : **"Follow — good faith and good feelings!"** ('The Last Will')

Some may find the oriental approach to life and death too complex. But the poet here reflects on their numerous aspects so vividly and joyfully. He does not tremble to think. He exhorts and persuades the reader to weigh and consider his viewpoints. Although it is always a challenging task to render Mahendra's poetry in English — we all know, English and Hindi belong to different groups of languages. However, Dr. D. C. Chambial, himself a highly perceptive and discerning poet in English and Hindi, has done a very good job. All along, his endeavour is to embody the spirit of the songs. He has explained, briefly yet adequately, meaning of

some Hindi words or ideas in footnotes. His translation gives the flavour and feel of the original. The English version is often as interesting and gripping as the Hindi text. In fact, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is quite fortunate in getting competent translators for all the seven volumes of his poems. They finely introduce him to a wider readership, nay the world audience; on the subject of eternal and vital significance. At times, the 'translation' may tempt and good the readers to go to the original — so poems and their translation are given side by side. The poet's creative art thus may contribute much to mutual understanding and international peace. After all, all life is one, and the theme dealt with individually concerns one and all. Surely, 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception' is an excellent anthology of poems on motifs that concern us all. The poet's treatment of the subject is both fresh and original. Beautifully printed and impressively brought out, it is a book to be "chewed and digested"; to be read over and over again. I am confident the English-knowing world will appreciate and welcome this literary venture.



A Critical Explication of Mahendra Bhatnagar's ' *Passion and Compassion* '

— *Dr. Anita Myles*

Mahendra Bhatnagar has been involved with the writing of poetry for the past six decades. His poems have been translated into English and compiled in several volumes. '*Passion and Compassion*' is his latest collection of fifty poems rendered into English by Dr.P .Adeshwar Rao. Thematically the volume is comprehensive bringing out admirably ,the poet's perception of society the world over. One has the opportunity to come into close contact with Mahendra Bhatnagar's varied experiences of life both pleasant as well as unpleasant for he believes that joys and sorrows together comprise the main tenets of human existence. The bitter truths of life are presented adroitly woven within the texture of his prolific and fecund imagination.

The poems compiled in this collection entitled *Passion and Compassion* revolve around man, the Divine's extraordinary creation. However, poems depicting the negative qualities of this supreme creation such as lack of humanism, selfishness, greed, desire to usurp what belongs to others, inequality and the corruption among political leaders outnumber the poems which enumerate the blessings of human emotions like love, passion and compassion for those in distress. Nevertheless, the poet is not entirely disturbed by this bleak scenario. His enduring cogent optimism rushes to rescue him enabling him to share his buoyancy about life with the readers. Nature, which occupies a prominent place in his other collections has been reduced to just a few poems in this collection. " Bewitched" is one such poem where the poet is enchanted by the fragrance and beauty of the jasmine. So much so that he personifies the creeper and its flowers. To quote the poet:

O the fair coloured!

**O the glittering coloured!
O my companion,
Soft and delicate!**

**From where
You have snatched /stolen
Such bewitching beauty!**

Similarly in the poem “Breeze”, the poet personifies the enlivening, redolent breeze for it has the puissance of exhilarating the poet. He solicits to have a life long companionship with the breeze that affords him such comfort and solace

The questions of life and death remain an enigma for the poet as he ponders over the evanescence of man’s existence. We flicker like a lamp and

**All of a sudden on any day
The throbbing of the heart will stop.**

But then one has to continue traversing thwarting the impediments of life’s journey. The same idea is contained in the poem ‘*A Moment*’. It takes just one moment for the journey of life to come to an end, hence the sensitive poet utterly percipient of fleeting time sincerely exhorts mankind to make the best of the few moments that are at hand and to

**live every moment to the fullest
Before
It crushes your existence.**

‘Willing to Live’ spells out the resoluteness of the poet to live stoically in an acrid and afflictive world come what may. The world may be full of bitterness and poison, the path may be extremely long, difficult and solitary but these blazing flames signify the astute realities of life. It would be sheer cowardice to flee into the world of death. No doubt death too is a reality of life but as long as one is alive the battle ought to be fought courageously in the so to say, “I was ever a fighter, so one fight more” in the Browningian sense.

Humanism, infallibly, strikes the keynote of the poems in the collection. Being a thorough humanist poet Mahendra Bhatnagar time and again stresses on the importance of human relationships in this ephemeral universe. ‘*Initiative*’ is a long poem

devoted to this subject. Mahendra Bhatnagar is mindful of the fact that to maintain human relationships

**It is desirable
To have a softly
Flowing stream
Of patience and peace.**

It is only then that the bonds of affection and fraternity are strengthened between man and man. Mutual understanding is the very basis of the ‘single family’ of mankind. In a country like India even one’s name has the potency of creating apprehension, mistrust suspicion and animosity for the name spells out one’s religion or one’s caste. The poet eagerly anticipates a time to come when names do not bear one’s clan or religion. After all at the root we are all human beings created by the same Divine Power.

In the contemporary scenario of uncertainty and suffering the emotion of love turns out to be a boon—‘A gift, life-like!’ Love reiterates words of comfort and solace having the inert potency to subdue the onslaughts of misfortune. Such feelings of oneness and brotherhood are to be treasured forever. Hence the poet states emphatically:

**The feeling of love and affection
Alone
Is the best choice in the creation!**

The above lines anticipate Matthew Arnold, who in spite of his cynical attitude to life believed in the creative power of love exhorting, “*Ah! Love let us be true to one another*”.

Two poems in the collection bearing the same title, that is, ‘Passion and Compassion’ re-establish the fact that only passion and compassion for human beings can make the tempestuous journey of life endurable. Bonds of affection, according to the poet, are the strongest to keep humanity together. To quote the poet :

**Let the waving wick of love
Go on burning
In both of our hearts!**

**Let the mutual emotion
And compassion**

**Of our living souls
Go on cherishing!**

The positive emotion of love takes away 'the sting of loneliness' from human existence more so when one has become old and lost his so called utility in society. The poet's heart reaches the suffering humanity simultaneously intensifying his desire to do something concrete and worthwhile for mankind.

While pondering upon the paucity of passion and compassion in this world Mahendra Bhatnagar is invariably compelled to take into account the existing selfishness, materialism and all round corruption in life. He is extremely agonized to note that political leaders, the representatives of the masses fail to be their well wishers and prefer to become usurpers. These leaders are not at all abashed to be enjoying the comforts and pleasures derived from ill begotten gains while

**There are people,
Thirsty and starved, weak, dispossessed. ..scared
Illiterate,
Oppressed, unorganized
Exploited/Deceivedl And suspicious!**

The poem '*Distressed*' is a dismal portraiture of a poor man's plight during floods when everything has been washed away by heavy rains ironically enough the ministers and leaders fly over in aircrafts for an aerial view. The heartlessness of such leaders and their sycophants is further accentuated in '*Victory Celebration*.' '*Usurpers*' records the poet's utter sense of dismay at those who rejoice after looting and grabbing what does not really belong to them. Then they very arrogantly forge documents to make it all their own legal possessions .With a heavy heart the poet seeks a solution to this reality of contemporary life. He writes:

**Is there any medicine
For this
Contagious social disease?**

True enough to grab and to usurp what belongs to others is indeed an incurable contagious disease. Such people lose their 'human identity',

How much the man,

**Has become selfish!
He is happy
Getting a little profit
By selling his integrity!**

The poet reminds us of the fact that this deception has existed in every age; man is inextricably bound to the 'cruel wheel of exploitation!' Yet he steadfastly believes that those who uphold equality will never accept defeat. He anticipates a change in the offing. Mahendra Bhatnagar thereby emerges as an ardent patriot entreating the readers to share his concern for bleeding India, sanguinely envisioning a gradual change for the barriers of fortitude may give way any day.

Mahendra Bhatnagar's painting a doleful picture of hypocrisy and corruption in no way brands him as a poet of pessimism. In spite of these crude realities of life the poet advocates hope and optimism. In '*Change in Environment*' he visualizes a new socioeconomic order in the future when

**Those exploited and oppressed
Have awakened,
And have become the architect
Of a new age!**

He is sure that the 'wheel of human progress' will always move forward, never backwards. An awakening is the need of the hour. He confidently exhorts the people

**Let your heart
Be in high spirits
And your search for
Your goal should not stop!**

Dejection and frustration lead to the ultimate doom of mankind. In the poem '*Enlightenment*' the poet admits that the bitter experiences of life have taught him innumerable lessons. He has gained maturity and has realized "the meanness of men", But then "men have to live/with mutual understanding" for the poet visualizes the world as "a single family". The realities of life make one wiser and tougher. The artificially created barriers of caste and creed also have to be dismantled enabling joys and sorrows to be shared, completely annihilating the feelings of alienation. The poet's

optimism is based on passion and compassion for mankind. Mahendra Bhatnagar curtly suggests the solution to this enigma in something as elementary as the inculcation of humaneness in every citizen of India.

Mahendra Bhatnagar may well be termed as the poet of feelings as thematically his poems are steeped in feelings and emotions. Stylistically also the poet makes use of appropriate sensuous images to give deeper meaning to his thoughts. Several poems exhibit the warmth of the poet's heart. The befitting application of imagery is noteworthy for it appends flavour and gusto to the poet's expression. Nature imagery finds unforgettable and original metaphorical expressions such as "roar of clouds", "cool water showers", "rustling breeze", etc. Personifications abound, while some poems are exquisitely pictorial, vivid and realistic. A fine juxtaposition of symbols, images and metaphors, successfully transports the reader into the poet's world.

The appropriate use of words and phrases reveals Mahendra Bhatnagar's ability to be a conscious artist and a meticulous craftsman. The subtle use of words not only enhances the emotional appeal of the poems but also gratifies the aesthetic sense of the readers. The poet unhesitatingly engages irony and satire while graphically exposing the hypocrisy of the national leaders of today. Mahendra Bhatnagar flagellates smarting criticism against time serving politicians, simultaneously acerbating his personal agony at the miserable plight of his fellow beings in poems like '*Distressed*' and '*Usurpers*'.

Thematically speaking, the poems of Bhatnagar are not at all skeptical and defeatist though they enumerate the seamy side of life. His is the minute observation of a realist backed by his rich personal experiences. Each poem in the collection is conclusive in itself and the overall message by the poet vacillates around the spirit of action, the expectation of progression and faith in oneself leading to optimism, stoicism and sanguinity. These poems are undoubtedly steeped in extreme signification for modern man who is, forever, contending, and disconcerted, perplexed tending to be a schizoid. The optimistic scholium of the poet will certainly provide

the urgently necessitous men relaxation to the readers in general and an *aurea mediocritus* to the anomie coeval soci, for eventual endurance in particular.

Carlyle stated that "poetry is not merely a criticism of life; it is the very truth of life, very essence of man's sublime quest for reaching the kingdom of eternal bliss." This statement about poetry stands true for the poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar. His poems are not just a criticism of life around him but they culminate in the very essence of life, perennial quest for truth which would in turn lead to eternal bliss. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is spontaneous for it is indeed, the voice of his soul. His poetry leads one out of the shades of mystery into the light of knowledge of eternity. Good poetry reveals the poet's attitude towards life. It is the transcript of the poet's thought and feelings with regard to a particular aspect of human life. Critics by common consent hold that good poetry should deal with the experiences of life in such a way that it inspires man to subsist nobly, a dictum well applicable to the poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar. Through aphoristic phraseology and pithy metaphors, he has successfully painted his ideas and experiences of life so that others may benefit as well without any reservations because the pain and suffering about which the poet writes are universal in nature but are also surmountable.



**MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR'S
'PASSION AND COMPASSION' : A pilgrimage of the heart**

— *Dr. O.P. Mathur*

*Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern
Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.*

(Robert Browning)

Mahendra Bhatnagar's *'Passion and Compassion'* is more than a random collection of his poems : it crystallizes various moods and emits certain significant values of life. But it seems that it is also possible to discover in the book an almost complete sequence delineating the stages of, to use his own words, a **'pilgrimage of the heart'** (p.4) from mere existential angst to richer sensual experiences, ultimately culminating in 'Enlightenment' (a word generally used in connection with Lord Buddha and thus embodying essentially Indian values).

The first sixteen poems are axial, for they assert that he is not only recollecting the past but also formulating his present mood of depression and existential brooding on **'The sting of loneliness / In a surging crowd'** (p. 12) He also seems to realize the meaninglessness of life and even of **'faith in perpetual relations'** (p. 24). The recollection of the past is very clearly mentioned in passages like the following :

**Now and then
They shower upon
An awkward lonely moment of night
Caught in the grip of pain.** (p. 2)

They refer to the **'moments of passion / Soaked in intimacy'** mentioned a little earlier in the same poem. These lines are from the opening poem. But the same idea is repeated in a later poem :

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**On the experience of my life
When I brood on peacefully
I peep through my inner past
Then all of a sudden
Taking a turn on my own accord
I return
To the present!** (p. 10)

The poet's existential stance is revealed in passages like the following which underlines the meaninglessness of life :

**No end
Of the path
We keep on walking! ...
Only a few moments
Are left for me ...
In life
There are only heaps of pebbles
Where are pearls?** (p. 6)

After a long drawn out foray into his past which he found to be blind alley in the labyrinth of life, the poet returns to the present. **'Steady self-centred, calm, alive / And balanced'** (p. 32), realizing that **'You yourself are / The doer and the judge / But not controller / You are detached'** (p. 38). Now he feels the contents of life **'May be divided into / Successive chapters'** (p. 42)

After the end of his first chapter of melancholic reflections he passes on to the others. Now he makes a new start and finds 'delight' in Nature, the earth having become **"Suhagin / Blessed with union / With her dear cloud"** (p. 52). He discovers femininity in the different phenomena of nature. The glittering coloured jasmine with its **'fascinating fragrance'** (p.60) makes the poet forget his own existence, as does a 'creeper' creeping around him in his imagination. In the case of the Breeze, he goes a step further and wants her to **'get a warm touch / of my body'** (p. 64), and even invites her :

**Come to my embrace
Breaking the bonds of shyness,
And get attached to me
In a life-long bond!** (p. 66)

Soon enough these inanimate objects lead to an animated love, a living woman on seeing whom the poet cannot but exclaim

Until now

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O worldly delight!

Where were you?

You the lotus-blue! (p. 68).

His desire to live further and sing a 'song of life' (p. 70) increases. He wants to lose himself and his entire grief in the enchantment of love, raising in his imagination even the paraphernalia of a wedding — "Eye catching festoons ... At each and every door" (p.76) as well as of a wedded life — "words of solace ... Brimming with compassion, / (p. 76) fake sulkiness full of love / of bygone days" (p.78). But soon the poet begins to feel that these recollections are not "enough / For spending the rest of my life" (p. 80) and closes this chapter to start a new one with a broader feeling, "simple, candid, innocent, guileless", "the great best worship" (p. 84) — the love for all mankind. But the poet is forced to make a dent in the circumference of this love, for how can he include in it exploiters of the common people who are "thirsty and starved, weak depressed, Scared / Illiterate / Oppressed, Unorganized" (p. 88). The poet has towards their exploiters nothing but contempt, condemnation and rage. Among such people are primarily included

... Corrupt political parties

And their wicked followers

Enriched by comfortable facilities (p. 88).

The poet's deep sympathy for the poor is best exemplified in the lurid picture of the flood-stricken people while the politicians stroll above them in "Roaring aircrafts in the sky / Like flying vultures" (p. 92). They celebrate the victory of their 'Gabbar' leader by shouting "loot" and "shoot" the opponent, without caring for their poor voters growling like goats and pigs and crying like jackals (p. 96). The poet's rage reaches almost a point of explosion in the poem 'Usurpers' in which he repeatedly calls them "rascals" who, among other things, prepare "fake documents" to grab the property of the poor and the helpless (pp. 104, 106). But at the same time the poet envisions a repetition of world history in which the sense of equality has triumphed after a bloody revolution. He urges the vanquished of today to have a firm faith in their ultimate victory :

Let this dam of faith

not crack!

Let this dream of new age

not break!

Let this thread of feeling

not be loosened! (p. 108)

But now he has inner restraints, a sense of maturity, a sense of values which he has acquired from his past experiences and the spell of feminine fascination. These fascinations of Nature and sexual love, now transcended by him into an all-embracing love for mankind which has revealed to him "The secret of life and of the world" (p. 150). This is the secret of "How to live rightly" (p. 150).

Mahendra Bhatnagar's '*Passion and Compassion*', thus, by capturing a "remembrance of things past" delineates the stages of a spiritual journey from the depths of existential despair to universal love (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*), leading to the '*Infinite passion and pain / Of finite hearts that yearn*' (Robert Browning, quoted in the beginning of this essay), apparently for the universal values of love and sympathy, radiated by his spiritual 'Enlightenment' and reminding us of his stance when he finally adopted this credo :

Let the entire compassion

Of men remain

Amidst all living beings!

It alone

Is the great best worship! (p. 84).

This is the poet's journey from individual 'passions' to universal 'compassion', from a mono-centric world to an omni-centric one whose circumference is nowhere and the centre in every living being.

Since I was writing in English, I had to use Dr. P. Adeswar Rao's English translation of the book, except in occasional cases of doubt. Independent of the translation, I dipped here and there into the original text in Hindi. Since Mahendra Bhatnagar has already published seven volumes of his writing, including three of poetry alone, I strongly feel that it is high time that an independent critical study of his poetry is published in Hindi. In this brief essay I can only commend him for his deft use of the language. His vocabulary is liberated from traditional restraints and he has been

able to make a subtle use of literary devices like rhythm, inner rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphor, personification, etc. His roaming imagery is highly appropriate and suggestive. He has mostly depended on rhythm instead of the artificial constraints of rhyme which, however shows up here and there, often within a line itself. The varying length of his lines is an aid to him in putting emphasis where required, but never giving the impression that it is prose artificially cut up into lines arbitrarily.

Mahendra Bhatnagar has been lucky in getting an excellent translator, rather a transcreator who has generally maintained the ideas of the original almost in the same metrical form and producing a similar sound effect.

This brings me to another point : the necessity of good translations of meritorious works in Indian languages so as to make them available to all the Indian readers as also to foreigners. For the promotion of the understanding of Indian regional cultures by all Indians, inter-language translations can be recommended. But this process will become much easier if they are all translated into one language which can only be Hindi, which is read and understood by the largest number of Indians and so can provide a common platform for all such translations. To project the image of the greatness of Indian classics and modern works of high calibre for international readership, obviously English is the only language which is very easily available to us, while being the language most widely understood in the world.

Translations like that of Dr. Adeswar Rao has already made me a convert to the desirability of prescribing good translations of standard works in our language courses and also of treating such translations for literary criticism of the authors concerned. This momentous task for the promotion of national understanding of regional cultures as also for projecting our literary and philosophical achievements of the past and the present on the international screen, much more effort than is being made now is urgently called for, because it is highly necessary and rewarding task, ever increasing and never ending.



PASSION AND COMPASSION :

Poetry Blended with Super Sense and Perception

— Mrs. Purnima Ray

Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of the avant-grade poets writing in Hindi. Seven Volumes of his poems have been translated into English. These include : 'Forty Poems Of Mahendra Bhatnagar', 'After The Forty Poems', 'Exuberance and other poems', 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry', 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception', 'Poems : For A Better World', & 'A Handful Of Light'. A selected collection of his poems has been translated into French — 'A Modern Indian Poet : Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : Un Poète Indien Et Moderne'. He received many prestigious awards, edited journals, guided many scholars officially, conducted many literary societies, and held many important academic and cultural posts. In a word, he is a multi-faceted personality continuing all this till date.

Mahendra Bhatnagar is a philosophical poet whose poems dazzle with scintillation of super sense and perception. 'PASSION AND COMPASSION' is a collection of his fifty latest poems translated into English by Prof. (Dr.) P. Adeshwar Rao. Prof. Rao has finely summed up his poetic sensibility in the preface :

" ... These poems present a vast range of themes covering many aspects of human life. Mahendra Bhatnagar's perception of human society and of the world and his attitude towards life are admirable. A poet endowed with rich experiences of life, pleasant and unpleasant, joyful and sorrowful, Mahendra Bhatnagar has depicted truth in its varied forms through his rich creative imagination. Every poem is a well thought out and precisely presented piece of art, a pearl reflecting in mirror of his poetic imagination. ... He is a poet, a philosopher and a prophet enriched with a fine sense of balance, propriety and pragmatism."

Prof. Krishna Kumar Goswami also appreciates his poetry in the same direction :

“ महेंद्र भटनागर मानवतावादी कवि हैं; जो व्यवस्था में परिवर्तन की बात

करते हुए कहते हैं कि प्रेम, सौन्दर्य, मानवता, प्रकृति, समाज, विश्व आदि परस्पर अनुस्यूत हैं। ... वास्तव में महेंद्र भटनागर शब्द-शिल्पी हैं जो भावों-विचारों को सूक्ष्मता से सँजोते हैं।”

As poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is a humanist-poet, human emotions are important to him. The title-poem asserts as well as confirms his belief :

All things are forgotten ... / Except / Those moments of passion / Soaked in intimacy / And those experienced moments / Of the blazing flames of relationships! ...

So, we can conclude with the poet, if there is passion, there must be and should be compassion, and it makes life 'divine' :

Now and then / They shower upon / An awakened lonely moment of night / Caught in the grip of pain, / And in the sinking weary heart, / Heavy and detached, / Turning into tears / Divine.

To the poet the real pilgrimage is to know oneself through suffering :

A dark cloud of tears surges / From the deep undiscovered / Pilgrimage of the heart, / And then ... / At that moment when / The splendour of holy feelings / Spreads on the face — ('Affection')

And such a pilgrimage is also a continuous journey :

No end / Of the path / We keep on walking! / Like a flickering lamp / Day and night / We keep on burning! ('Reality')

And to know oneself is a reality. There is also going back in this journey :

Hazy pictures, / Relevant or irrelevant / Devoid of any harmony, / Order broken / Emerge disorderly! ('Continuity')

As a doctor of human passions and emotions he can diagnose the disease of the modern age :

The people — / Are dejected so much that / They commit suicide / In the state of their restlessness! / Or / Lose the balance of their body and mind!

Like an expert he points out :

And in their perturbed mood / They weep — without a reason! / They laugh — without a reason! ('Ascetic')

He reveals the symptoms :

In an intense electrified suffocating atmosphere / When the unrest resounds / Heart rending / Shriek and scream / Burning in flames / The ruined life / Confined in a prison ! ('Expectation')

In fact, he makes an ultra-sonography of it, and prescribes the medicine :

In those disastrous moments / A desire springs up / That someone shall like us, / Well, / Now and then!

The poet describes the pathetic condition of the patient who does not have the medicine that can cure :

All my life / I was alone, / unseen — / Ever neglected, / Totally ignored! All my life / I bore unbearable / Agony and pain! / To anyone / Never I did say / Any word for help! / I burnt myself / In the fire of curse! ('Ever Deprived')

He shows us how such pain makes one steady :

I stay on amassing pain! / O, I stay on / Amassing how much grief! / I stay on / Amassing pain and grief / of many-many years! ('Lively')

And this pain gets here a different meaning, a new dimension : as one cannot sleep due to this pain, so one has to keep oneself awake :

I was awake throughout nights / I was awake throughout days / I was awake throughout my life ...

so one can know so many things :

I stay on / Wrapping up my body / With much dirt and brownish dust! / My feet got stuck in the mire / Serpents coiled around / My neck and ankles, / I am bound by cobras Black and venomous! ...

The poet depicts the power of passion :

When the seism of lust / Or of 'ardent love' / Makes whole body tremble, / Every strong pivot / of the mind totters! / Then, the man forgets / His past, present and future! ('Violation')

Yet, he, like French poet Alfred de Vigny, accepts suffering as the passion real :

**Keep quiet, / Bear everything! / Lay down / Suffer patiently/
Here or there!** ('Substance')

and the title suggests that it is the real 'substance'.

He believes that creativity is born out of suffering, and it can bind people with one another down through the ages :

**It is better / If you write / On the walls of an empty room, /
If you portray / Your heart / In different colours! / Perhaps,
someone at some moment / May read or ponder over!**

It is this suffering through which the poet gathers experience :

**What have I done? / Throughout my life / Except paying /
The debt imposed / by society?** ('Experience')

and so many things he can say through these lines that declare his poetic vision and perception. Even his regret marked with repetition and exclamation touches and moves the universal sentiment :

**Mistakes done / Plenty of mistakes done, / I missed /
I missed every time!**

At the fag end of his life the poet enlightened with a vast 'experience' can realise how much time, that is so valuable, has been wasted, and he cannot find out his identity as a human being in the fullest sense :

**Where is my existence? / Only is my statue / Dumb and
lifeless!**

the idea of existentialism gets here a new dimension also. The poet makes us realise also that if there is passion there is attachment, and our passion or emotion is very much interlinked with Nature; from morning to night we are attached to it :

**As the day breaks — / Little and gentle birds / Wake and
get rise me up / Flying, peeping curiously / And chirping
melodiously / through doors and windows!**

When the night falls :

**Now and then / Crickets and frogs / Make me sleep / From
ponds nearby, / By their incessant singing, / Make me
wander / And take me to those / New realms of fancy!**
('Attachment')

Moreover, 'the blue sky, formless and infinite' 'bewitches' the poet, and he does not want to leave this earth :

**How I can run away / From such a beloved? / How can I
leave the earth / So charming and captivating!**

and we can compare these lines with Rabindranath's :

*I don't want to die in this beautiful earth, / I do want to live
instead, amongst men. / In this sunshine this flowered garden /
In the heart full of life if I would get a place ...* (Pran, Kadi O
Kamal)

It is not that poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is not aware of sordidness and bitterness of everyday life, on the contrary, he clears :

**Passing through / The solitary path of life / long and difficult
/ Burning every moment / In the reality of life / And its
blazing flames / Suddenly ...** ('Willing to live')

Life is not a bed of roses to him, yet he is willing to live :

**Today, / When I saw you — / I want to drink / A bit more of
poison! / In this life / Brimming with bitterness / I want to
live further!**

Having compassion the passionate poet sings the paean of life and love :

**You — / Create music (rhythm) / in heart, / I — / will sing
The song of life!** ('Passion and compassion')

As he is a worshipper of life, he prays to the Sun, the god of Life :

**O Sun, / The blazing red sun! / Fill / My dejected heart /
With the fire of life!** ('Prayer')

How romantic and poetic these lines are :

**Let the waving wick of love / Go on burning / In both of our
hearts! / Let the mutual emotion / And compassion / of our
living souls / Go on cherishing!** ('Passion and compassion')

It is through the power of passion and compassion this poet can do the miracle :

**You — / Tell a story of enchanting love / Listening which /
I — / Can sleep peacefully / for a while! / And lose myself /
In sweet and charming dreams / Forsaking my entire grief!**

To 'forsake' the 'entire grief' is really a miracle. And the poet's belief is intensified in his promise :

I — / Will make / The splendour of heaven / To stoop down / At your feet!

To the poet human love plays an important part in his willing to love :

O my sweet maiden / Brimming with compassion / And with unbridled emotion / At once / on your own accord / You have fallen in love with me! ('Remembrance')

The poet says it because :

To feel the happiness / of persuasion / To fill the boring moments / Burdened by monotony / With ever new / Matchless / Colours of life, / I am reminded / of your fake sulkiness! ('Pretext')

And the following lines express the philosophy of *Vaisnavite 'baults'* :

To behold / Again and again / The past love / of many a birth, / And through this pretext / To keep the auspicious lamp / of our spiritual union / on the threshold! / I am reminded / of your fake sulkiness!

Like *Radha* the poet exclaims :

Your recollection / Is enough / For spending the rest of my life / Happily! ('To a Distant Person')

But the poet surpasses *Radha* along with the *Vaishnav* poets, and goes further :

Until today / I have kept with care / The trust-treasure of your feelings / in my mind. / For living long / It is enough / Only to render them / Into sweet songs!

In the poem 'Perception' we meet a lover who overcomes the separation in a very unique way :

Forget — / The colours, / The blooms, / The streams of desires / Experienced / Gushing through / The body and the mind! ('Perception')

.And this concept is undoubtedly a very new, realistic and modern one. At the same time the poet hints us the idea of the Soul. So the poet can confirm :

The feeling of love and affection / Alone / Is the best choice in the creation! / The feeling of love and affection of man / In the world of men / Is the all human society! / It lone / Is the great best worship! ('The Good')

Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is a worshipper of Beauty and Nature as he exclaims :

You are a deep puzzle, / O, creeper — jasmine! ('Bewitched')

The poet believes in the empirical knowledge, because feelings and sensations are very important to him. Through these mediums the poet can gather experience as well as knowledge, and enter the world where there is peace :

Whenever / I experience / This fragrance, / Outer and inner / of the body and soul — / I forget worldliness / And my own existence!

To him 'beauty' and 'fragrance' create a unique world beyond the worldly world :

I submit myself / Before you / With devotion utmost! / The fragrant one! / The beautiful one! / You the creeper — jasmine!

So the poet invokes 'Breeze' that goes everywhere as it is described in the *Bhagavat Puran* :

O My dear Breeze, / Pleasant, fragrant / and intoxicated! / Flow towards me / Slowly and gently!

When the poet is speaking of momentary worldly bliss, he reminds us at the same time that a moment, just a moment is so important in our life :

A moment / Only a moment / Snatches away / Life / All of a sudden! / Yes, only a moment! ('A Moment')

'Nay' is a beautiful poem. Here the poet wanders, and at the same time skilfully establishes the mystic truth :

Well, How one can be / A stranger / In a crowd!

As a mystic poet he believes :

In fact / For him, who had lived asceticism / There is no difference / Between dying and living! / For him / There is no difference / Between / Drinking poison or nectar!

('Ascetic')

Although Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is a mystic poet, a worshipper of Life, Beauty, Nature, and Love, a seeker after Truth, a romantic poet and a humanist, he is very sensitive towards modern society and its evils :

**How much the man / Has become selfish! / He is happy /
Getting a little profit / By selling his integrity!** ('Surprise')

To him the idea of socialism and communism is a mere dream; the only reality is :

**In every age only those / Who offered their lives / To the
blazing flames / of deficiencies, / Had burnt their youth /
Since generations / In fighting injustice / And in changing
the system, / Only they / were deceived / In every age, /
And were crushed / Continuously / In every age / Caught
/ In the cruel wheel of exploitation!** ('The Dream of Equality')

Yet, the poet admits as well as encourages :

**The sense of equality / Among men, / Will not be dormant,
And ever admits defeat!**

He points out finely how these comrades of socialism as well as communism are cheated by the rascals :

**Rascals — / They are ready / To deceive, / To cheat the
weak ...** ('Usurpers')

The poet exposes the multifaceted characteristics of these 'rascals' :

**Rascals they are — / Frauds, hypocrites, / vigilant
Ready to garb, / To loot, to steel, / To show cunningness /
Or / To indulge / in direct fist-attacks!** ('Usurpers')

The poet is optimistic in raising us Shelleyan like hope :

**Treat your defeat / As a prior intimation to your victory, /
Treat the darkness / As the background of sunrise!** ('Vision')

how memorable these lines (quoted above) are! The title 'Vision' is important, because 'vision' comes through suffering. So the poet exclaims :

**How much / The season has changed / New looks / All
around!** ('Change in Environment')

According to the poet knowledge gained through suffering has the solid basis, and it can never betray us in showing the right

path :

**this / metaphysical knowledge, / Testified by experiment, /
Is with us!** ('Transition')

Certainly this optimistic poet can exclaim :

**Neither I was disappointed / nor dejected! / It is true — /
All my efforts were useless, / I could not succeed, / But I am
/ Not at all restless!** ('Awakening')

So he encourages us :

**Certainly, doomed you are / If you are dejected! / Ruined
you are / If you are frustrated!**

How symbolically the poet says that death and decay is the fact of life which cannot be denied :

**Blowing towards / Towns and villages, / Carrying the stench
/ of the decaying carcasses!** ('Change')

but he reminds us at the same time that there is, of course, an alternative that should be followed :

**Beware of it / And change the direction / of the blowing
wind ...**

**What wind is blowing! / When everyone / Thinks only / of
his own interest, ...** ('Escape')

he then exclaims with a great emphasis :

**Struggling with / The contemporary challenges / He has to
opt for / The reality of life! / He has to brood over / The
passionate feelings and thoughts! / Of each and every man!**
(Initiative)

He depicts this struggle of the modern man as an alrounder in the beautiful poem 'Player' :

**I am running / Without a pause ... / Day and night / Night
and day / Panting and bewildered, / Now and then / Falling/
And rising, / Yet I keep on running / In quick succession! ...**

**I keep on swimming / Disgorging foam / Again and again! /
It is not a cool / Olympic swimming pool / But a boiling hot
water tank / Emitting fumes! ... / I have seen very well /
Corpses were afloat / On the fleeting waves! ...**

I keep on leaping and jumping / Returning / Again and again!

I am lifting the weights / One after another, / Weighty and weightier ...

Yet asserts :

Certain it is — / Every heart attack / will be defeated / And every paralysis / will be crippled / By the soul immortal!
Industrious am I / Will keep on living, / Will remain / Brim with life / Free and liberated!

because he knows :

It is — / The man / Who can face / any disaster! ...
(Attribute)

This poem 'Player' heightened his stature as a poet avant-grade.

To conclude one must say that Mahendra Bhatnagar is a great contributor not only to Indian Poetry but to World Poetry and Literature. He excels in the newness and richness of his thought process and poetic expression, and he has created a style of his own. 'PASSION AND COMPASSION' is his poetic achievement wherein the thought-provoking lines blended with high aesthetic sense and perception show us a world beyond world. Many times he soars higher into the sky of imagination than the poets do around him. In this respect he is matchless as well as incomparable.

Mahendra Bhatnagar's Compassionate Passion in 'Passion and Compassion'

— Shaleen Kumar Singh

The Poetry collection called '*Passion And Compassion*' is another additional volume of Poetry that epitomizes concrete and passionate thoughts and feelings of Mahendra Bhatnagar, a well known name in the world of Hindi Literature. Though the poems are translated from Hindi and have scarcity of word-by-word transcreation, yet the careful, experienced and dexterous task of translation by Dr. P. Adeshwar Rao goes a long way and succeeds in transmitting the notions of Mahendra Bhatnagar to readers and lovers of poetry of English again. His previous collections 'FORTY POEMS OF MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR' (1968), 'AFTER THE FORTY POEMS' (1979), 'EXUBERANCE AND OTHER POEMS' (2001), 'DR MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR'S POETRY' (2002), 'DEATH-PERCEPTION : LIFE-PERCEPTION', exemplify the delicate, soft and tender sensibility of the Indian poets. (esp. Hindi poets)

The work of translation, despite, being a Himalayan task in conveying the true message and ideas of the poet as-it-is has always been a potent medium of propagating the poetic sensibilities to a large community. It is, undoubtedly, a commendable effort by the translators of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar who have left only 'a thin line between them and the original composition by the poet'. His poems, in this sense, are truly perfect and immaculate, and amply noticeably in terms of passionate poetry. Especially his latest collection '*Passion and Compassion*' reveals myriad aspects of Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry from bare realities of life to Vedantic philosophy from pessimistic longings and agony of man to optimistic overflow of emotions, from poetic-insight and celebration to poetic cravings for unfolded objects from subjective *Ananda* to objective disappointment, from worldly embarrassment to Non-Worldly marvel, from inner poetic Sojourn to minute throes of

Nostalgia and from passionate depiction of Nature to Compassionate outlook of a poet to entire human kind.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar who is an established signature of Hindi poetry has also by and by acquired a significant place in the kingdom of Indo-English Poetry. His Poetry has now generated into a solid entity of and exemplary outpourings and the present collection is a fine instance of his excellent versification in which the poet has blended several themes of society with his miraculous expression. The first poem of the collection **'Passion and Compassion'** epitomizes the relationship of man and man and its immortality, **"All things are forgotten... .. /Except/Those moments of passion/Soaked in intimacy /And those experienced moments /Of the blazing flames of relationship"**

Although passions and desire are considered as worldly objects that perish and mingle into dustbin of time and nothingness, these brittle and transitory objects and inspires man to live each moment the fullest degree of satiety. He says, **"Every moment/ Has its own mysterious meaning, /It creates/Its own whole history./ Again and again."** And inspires, **"That is why it is essential-/You live every moment to the fullest/Before / It crushes your existence."**

The latest feat *Passion and Compassion* of Mahendra Bhatnagar, a poet of optimism and certitude bears authentic testimony of refined poetic sensibility and even well-translated poems in a hard-bound, attractive and slick volume of poetry. The book is his documentary on his inner sojourn that he thought out his long, successful but full of mixed bag of experiences both good and bad, sweet and sour and lovely and bitter, but the poet who remains poet life long a votary of past never life leaves the shores of present and after a 'Continuity' of thoughts of 'Inner Past' where 'Hazy pictures' that are 'Relevant or irrelevant' emerge disorderly before the eyes of the poet, and in a different way, the poet comes back to Normalcy and encounters the present, **"Then all of a sudden /Taking a turn on my own accord /I return / To the present! / To the 'entanglements of earthly life'."**

Here in 'entanglements of earthly life' finds the escapist and perplex attitude of the poet and in the same way exhibition of poet's lovelessness, loneliness and wilderness within can also be

marked out in the poem 'Nay' when the poet says and shudders, **"Well/How one be/A stranger in /In a crowd! / Well How can one fear/ The sting of loneliness/In a surging crowd."**

Another poem 'Ever deprived' is a self-admitting comment of the poet in which the poet acknowledges his life-long deprivation by each and every one, **"All my life / I was alone, /Unseen – /Ever neglected./Totally ignored!"**

In the poem 'Experience' the poet repents on the past mistakes that he kept on doing through out his life like paying the debt imposed by the society and, **"Now /What is left out/Except/Tasting the bitter juice of repentance? And he adds saying, "The world/Does not possess /Even a little/shame and modesty/Either in the past/Or in the present."**

But the bewitching charm and attachment towards the world of *Maya*, the illusion is so powerful that the poet feels himself almost undone and feeble before it. He says, **"How can I run away/From such a beloved?/How can I leave the earth/So charming and captivating!"**

The realistic frame of poet is exhibited in some of his poems when he sings, **"living life-/Is difficult, unbearable/And burdensome!/As if/It is a dreadful ride/On two boats."**

The change in the society and social is *ipso facto* the prime cause of Mahendra Bhatnagar's pain and pleasure and especially when he looks at the knows who are every time indulged in deceiving and befooling, he bursts at once: **"Rascals / They are ready/ To deceive /To cheat the weak / And the straightforward!"**

But contrary to this in 'Change in Environment' he is glad to find people progressing in our advancing age of Equality where: **"Those exploited and oppressed/Have awakened /And have become the architect/Of New age!/ The sky echoed by the slogans/Of feeling of equality!"**

Because Man is born to proceed on the path of Evolution ever and ever without any hindrance, Mahendra Bhatnagar justifies it when he says, **"This wheel of human progress/Never turns back/History is the witness."**

These bitter and sweet experiences of life have conferred maturity to the poet and taught him to live in a righteous manner

who is willing to learn right from the wrong. He say, “**The meanness of man/Has taught me/How to live rightly!’/The ingratitude/Has revealed me / The secret of life/Liberating me/From the spell of fascination.**”

The poet discloses himself the spring of his poetic inspiration. How he could be able to sing his pain into poetry and how he put his agony into corpus of words, “**Then alone/I could know / The secret of the life and of the world / When I was badly hurt/By my own-selves and by others!’**”

To conclude, the poems of the collection consistently create a cohesive structure in respect of form and content. Though the poems are translated from Hindi, yet the translators is so deft in his task that he creates almost the same rhyming in his English translation and continue the glory and joy of poetry in the other language also. The brevity, dramatic twists, ideas inter spread with emotions and thoughts, inclusion of Hindi suitable words blend well to fascinate the intellectuals and the hard-bound cover with the poet’s portrait prompts love at first sight and add the glamour of the book more and more. Certainly the book will be welcomed by the poets and critics of Hindi and Indian English Literature and stand magnificently on the stage of Literature.



Passion And Compassion : A Review

— *Dr. B.C. Dwivedy*

'Passion and Compassion' is a book of 50 Hindi Poems of a senior poet Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar translated by Professor Dr. Adeswar Rao. Dr. Rao himself is an established poet and he has been able to retain the original taste of the poetic beauty in the English versions of each poem.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a progressive poet whose writings are marked by a change of time. The poems in this book present a vast range of themes covering many aspects of human life. The poems 'Passion and Compassion', 'Affection', 'Expectation', 'Ever Deprived', 'Violation', 'Bewitched', 'Perception', 'Surprise', etc. expose the delicacies of human mind that touch the reader's sentiment. The poems 'Reality', 'Expectation', 'Substance', 'Experience', 'The Dreams of Equality', 'Transition', 'Change' etc. are representative of the poet's realism which is expressed through various situations of life. Some other poems, like 'Willing to Live', 'Lively', 'Breeze', 'Two Poles', 'Distressed', 'Surprise', 'Usrpers', etc. show the nakedness of modern man, modern society. Some other poems are dealing with the theme of regeneration, it is a journey from darkness to light, despair to hope. They are 'Premonition', 'Ascetic', 'Delight', 'Change in Environment', 'Transition', 'Awakening', 'Player', etc.

This is the latest translated volume of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar. After reading this volume the reader will definitely draw an idea that the poet's craving is for a regeneration of the modern world in strength, light and life. It is a movement towards a positive attitude. The poet wants man to have self epression and self confidence. He has seen man vanquished in his bitter struggle for life but still he does not lose faith. He has identified the instinct of regeneration and revival in man that is, to get up again, to live again and not to die.

**Treat your defeat
As a prior intimation to your victory.
Treat the darkness
As the background of sunrise!
Let this dam of faith / Shall not crack!
Let this dream of new age / Shall not break!
Let this thread of feeling / Shall not be loosened!** ('Vision')

The poems in this volume are not any outburst of the poet's emotion, rather we can call it emotion yoked with intellect like metaphysical poetry. The poet's experiences in the contemporary world have got expression in his poems. He laments the hypocritical way of living in the world around.

**What have I done? / Throughout my life
Except doing strange foolish things,
Except paying / The debt imposed / by society?**

**I lived;
But / Have I learnt the way of living?
(Have I practised the style of hypocrisy!)** ('Experience')

The poet's depiction of the predicament of modern man is most vivid most natural and touching. He has studied the society bit by bit and as a reformer tried his best to feed the society with his ideas on regeneration and encouragement through poetry.

**In an intense electrified / Suffocating atmosphere
When the unrest resounds
Heart rending
shriek and scream,
Burning in flames
The ruined life
Confined in a prison!**

**In those disastrous moments
A desire springs up
That someone shall like us,
Well, / Now and then!** ('Expectation')

The poet has depicted man as a lonely traveller in the path of life, ever neglected and totally ignored. He has expressed his bitterness, agony and pain in several poems. An example may be taken from his poem 'Ever Deprived' :

**I could not find anyone
who can soothe /
My oozing wounds / Even for a while
The rapid hailstorm / Never stopped!
Alone I wandered
In the realm of dearth —
In home, in cities and in villages!**

In some other poems we find a simultaneous attempt made by the poet to convince the reader the positive ways of life and a tendency in man with a will to live with love.

**Today / When I saw you
I want to drink / A bit more of poison / In this life
Brimming with bitterness
I want to live further!** ('Willing to Live')

In the poet's opinion love makes man's will to live in spite of all bitterness in the hard core of life's reality. He has ascertained his faith in the Keatsian definition of love-it is that into which one sinks with a delicious sense of release from pain, responsibility and moral inhibition. Love is a sort of 'oneness' or 'fellowship' with essence. The poet has attempted to fathom the depth of love. Love has been divinised.

**Let the waving wick of love
Go on burning / In both of our hearts!
Let the mutual emotion / And compassion
Of our living souls
Go on cherishing!** ('Passion and Compassion - 2')

**To behold
Again and again
The past love / Of many a birth
And through this pretext
To keep the auspicious lamps
Of our spiritual union
On the threshold!** ('Pretext')

Love is a precondition through which life is lived. When love is pure and intense it gives the lover abundance of pleasure, fulfillment and perfection. It makes man move towards a feeling that the entire universe is a single family. Man has to live with

mutual understanding.

The poet has dreamt of a new age. He is surprised at the change that has come over the world; the new generation has brought it forth. Transcendence has already started. Blood-shed minimised. The new star of faith has been rising fast and doubt has been vanquished.

**Those exploited and oppressed
Have awakened.**

**And have become the architect
Of a new age!**

**The sky echoed by the slogans
Of the feelings of equality!**

How much

The season has changed! ('Change in Environment')

Several poems in the book mention of transcendence in various forms at different states. The poet draws the mind towards a consciousness in which he is steady, self centred, calm and balanced. It is a state when man goes beyond the difference of good and evil, life and death.

The poet finds such a state mostly in communion with nature. Natural beauty leaves with him certain magical touch. This magical touch is that of devotion to the creator of such beauty. The mystic faith has reached culmination.

**Whenever
I experience / This fragrance**

**Outer and inner
Of the body and soul**

**I forget / worldliness
and my own existence!**

× × ×

For some moments / I lose myself in this world

**I submit myself / Before you
with devotion utmost!** ('Bewitched')

The poems in this volume are a matured expression of his feelings and experience. The poet's objective is to bring a progress in the mind of people of this gradually deteriorating world. The poems leave a deep impression in the reader's mind.

Poems That Ever Haunt ['Passion And Compassion']

— *Dr. Narendra Kumar 'Kusum'*

Poetry, as they say, is the greatest gift of God to man, but it is not equitably distributed. Only a few are fortunate to receive it, some in a large measure, others only a part of it. Some have to sweat for it though they may not scale the greater heights. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of those chosen few who have made a special niche for themselves in the realm of Hindi poetry. This octogenarian poet by any standards of judgement can not be called old since he like Browning can legitimately say :

Grow old along with me

The best is yet to be.

Or like Tennyson's Ulysses he can declare :

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!

As though to breathe were life,

This approach to life has made him a prolific writer who has to his credit a large number of publications, especially in Hindi poetry. The ease with which he writes is almost rare. His poetry reflects both his personality and his view of life.

When one sits down to read and enjoy Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry one is bound to be touched and charmed by his extraordinary poetic fervour and 'unpremeditated art'. One may wonder at this great gift of poetry that God has bestowed on him. He never seems to labour, poetry, as it were, gushes forth from his inspired soul. The present reviewer has the privilege of going through his poems a number of times earlier also.

'PASSION AND COMPASSION', a collection of his Hindi poems alongwith its English rendering by Dr. Adeswar Rao is presently in my hands. After a thorough reading of these poems I have a feeling of great elation and my respect for Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has increased manifold for a very simple reason that

largely become dreary, drab and dull by a laboured intellectual gymnastics, his spontaneous, rhythmic and heart touching notes, though in blank verse, serve as a great relief to those who fervently look for it in Hindi poetry. To enjoy his poetry is to enjoy life in its fulness.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a romantic poet with all his subjectivity, melancholy, love, nostalgia for the past, lyricism and philosophy. He is never prosaic, always lyrical in his concept and its execution in poetry. His diction is never archaic, it keeps pace with the march of time. He has a wonderful command over poetic craft as he has an inherent poetic sense in him.

In this present collection we have poems of love, poems of nature, poems of social concerns and poems of universal brotherhood. Infact, various moods of the poet are manifest in these poems. Though these poems are not cast in traditional stanzas, their rhythmic arrangement gives them an inner music which one can feel while reading these poems. Through these poems we can have a perceptive look into the heart of the poet who sometimes hears the 'Still sad music of humanity', at other times he longs for peace and happiness. He is never pessimistic. He cherishes an abiding hope for a better tomorrow and fills us with a sense of assurance and optimism. His lyrics haunt us by their poetic charm and their music peeps on ringing into our ears long after we have closed the book. In Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar we have an accomplished poet who may hope to live for a long time in readers' heart by his extraordinary poetic output.

It is heartening to see that these Hindi poems have been translated into English by Dr. Adeswar Rao who is a great Hindi scholar in his own right. But, one may feel a little disappointment when one may see that the English rendering unfortunately fails to match the effect of the original Hindi poems.

Hope Turning Pearls : The Vision of New and Better World in the Poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar

— *Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh*

Mahendra Bhatnagar, a well-established name of optimistic and humanistic poetry, with his mammoth published works has emerged before us as an icon of protest and sensitive poetry which not only infuses an understanding and an eye of glancing the reality of things but also motivates us to stand affront and speak against such eccentricities and leads us to think and rethink over it time and again. Neither has he wished us to be *Messiah*, nor God incarnate nor anyone castigating the masses. He regards 'Poetry as the vehicle for locating a man in the matrix of existence in the society' which is largely woven with the warp and woof mainly political social absurdities of time. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a realist essentially and favours simple and unpretentious style, though his poetry is conversational sometimes in tone, implying all its gazettes, is a dialogue and his (previous collections) in Hindi mostly which are written in metre and rhyme, yet the present collection in unmetrical and unrhymed verse, points towards his profound understanding of burning questions of contemporary time.

The present collection is a portrayal of the tragedies of modern times where he sometimes considers translations as a bridge between two minds' for making a stranger familiar, sometimes castigates the 'so-called saviors of the nation'; the leaders, bureaucrats and contractors and sometimes with his brimming optimism appears to be singing the welcome song of 21st century as well as praying for the global unity, harmony and peace. His poems are not only philosophical, realistic, spontaneous, romantic, optimistic, natural and mystic but also depict the most essential theme of modern times; the theme of global peace which now appears to be in peril because the monsters of terrorism have slain the We feeling among the mankind and put a more detestable picture of the

world. In the first poem of the collection 'Translation : A Conjunction', the poet feels that translation of literature should be encouraged so that we may bridge the gaps of cultural, ethical and linguistic diversities. He says :

**Translation is
A celestial body of
Human sagacity
Distinguished and significant.** (p. 17)

But do we ever think why the poet took such themes as the main subject of his poetry. It is certainly the complex and paradoxical scenario of the present in which we boast of our achievement of reaching to the moon but fail to reach to the heart of the proliferate and the common man. The hearts are broken, panic-stricken and even painful. Our advancement in science and technology has gratified us with the innumerable boons of Computer, Electricity, Air-Plains, and Rockets and so on, yet it has also given birth to the lethal concepts of capitalism, existentialism, utilitarianism and individualism on the other. The more we have broadened our limits of thinking, the more we have shrunk in our attitude. The degeneration, hoarding, shooting graph of crimes, socio political dilemmas mental conflicts, injustice, inequalities and corruption of all kinds can hardly afford the poet in Bhatnagar to be quiet and agape. In the poem 'Vasudhev Kutumbkm', 'Whole World A Family' begins with the castigation of a man who creates a wedge between man and man :

**In today's progressive and civilized world
Segregation man from man
On the basis of
Castes, households, creeds or wealth;
Calling one the low
And the other high
Calling one our own
Another one other's
Is a serious crime
An unpardonable crime.** (p. 85)

Man has been shattered absolutely. He is in the grip of terror, dumb or helpless and is controlling his emotions. A horrible

image of terror can be seen here :

**Extreme constrictions
Has palsied lips
Hands and feet have been immobilized
Angst reigns
Humanity seethes with anger
Holocaust looms large everywhere.** (p. 111)

A large number of the poems of the collection deal with the social problems of Modern Indian society like 'The Bigots' on communalism, 'In 1996 A.D.' on Linguism, 'The Destitute' on Poetry, 'Atmosphere', 'Trickery of Votes' on Political hollowness, 'One Sunday' on boredom, 'Terror-struck' on Terrorism, 'Self-Destruction' on Dehumanization and 'Corruption' on Corruption. Rest of other poems are either an urge to rebuild our society or to revive our ancient morals or to re-communicate with modern man so that our progeny may dream for a happy social set-up and enhance our mental, ethical, moral and cultural status to an optimum level. Many poems of the collection inspire man to act and to live life in all its totality without panic and hesitation and advises the man not to be fatalist, frustrated and dismay. Anita Myles recognizes this trait of the poet and observes :

" He does not believe in destiny and that man is mere a puppet in the power and ever tightening grip of destiny yet he encourages one to live on with grief, fortitude and determination."¹¹

He considers Man as Man and limitations of man as well.

He says :

**Man
Is human
And not an animal.** (p. 21)

But he suggests further :

**Endow him with wisdom
He will understand,
Amend himself
And shall stand altered.** (ibid)

And invokes the Modern Man and Thinkers in 'Invoking Modern Man' to make their own societies by saying :

**Modern thinkers
Come, draw near us**

And for the sake of humanity

Let us create our society. (ibid)

This dreamy society of the poet will be : 'having no religion and no caste' or 'geographical boundaries of the nation.' At a place the poet is so perplex that he questions in the beginning of the poem 'The Other Age' :

When will that age come

When a human

Will simply be called the human? (p.33)

Now the man is identified with his links to castes, sub-castes, languages, dialects, colour and race despite his oneness in attributes, needs, births, deaths, values and morals. The primeval face of human being is neglected by the modern society and it is the only cause of the rebel of Bhatnagar's poetry. His efforts in his poetry are '**For those / who are not able to make both ends meet**' and '**life is not a bed of roses or a pleasant.**' The poet is with the destitute and the helpless and writes :

For those who

Do not have leave

For leisure

Dance drama and literature

And all the exhibitions

And Television

Are just ironic. (p. 37)

He, at times, seems to be the spokesman of the masses as well the pioneers of the reformers who are firm in their determination to 'infuse confidence' and 'diffuse all misgivings of mankind'. Admitting his duties in present times he asserts :

We are determined

To elude deep rooted

Despondency and dejection

From every melancholy heart

And to rejuvenence it .

With optimism (p. 121)

In the poem 'Realistic Ideal' his awareness and sense of objectivity mingled with sense of duty can be marked out :

We have delineated life and the living

Only objectively in letter and spirit.

Equality of man

Has always been our guiding principle,

Our dreams to see every man

Thriving excellently. (p. 117)

In the poem 'Attention' the poet commences with a sheer expressing the horrible image of the time when 'darkness and despondency', 'intense melancholy and utter Hopelessness' has ceased the entire universe. The poet invokes us and invites by saying :

Come

Let us sing songs of hope

To blight the blues

And snuff out gloom.

Surely darkness will die. (p. 113)

Though the mode of Bhatnagar is ironic, yet it is also that looks plain repertoire and at the same time unfolds lyrics of suggestions and innuendos. The bulk of his poetry is political and protestal in nature. Like Borges, he narrates the national scene in true and sincere words, depicting the political, social, moral and artistic shortcomings of the age. Using irony as his weapon and paradoxes, imagery and parody as his tools, he expresses the predicament of the common man. 'Tomfoolery' exhibits the plight of a common man who is betrayed by the so called leaders to proclaim wrongly as architect of India's destiny :

See the coin phrase : secularism —

And the other of

Social justice.

Not only these

There are other cliches like

National integration

And constitutional propriety. (p. 95)

Politics has now become synonyms with dream pedlary and the poet is grieved to see the hollowness and vast — chasm between the promise and performance of a politician. When such gang of swindlers who are the traitors of the nation are caught red handed, a picture of amazement stands straight before us :

But all have been nabbed

And brought to book :

The monks, the politicians

Cunning ministers, the preceptors et. al.

Amazement en masse!

A furry and not a fairy!

The masks have been shed

The true faces are revealed! (p. 91)

In such a Filthy atmosphere, the birth of a rebel voice is natural and the awakening makes the swindlers away :

Ah!

Whose catcall is it?

Eh

The public has awakened!

Let us buzz off! (p. 41)

The poet's own motivation to rebel is notable because he also believes in the unity of minds and ideals. His call to break the shackles of boundaries and the differences of language, dialect, colour, caste and creed is justified when he asks :

How long will he then

Continue to be differentiated?

After all how long will he

Bear hundreds of stings

Of the savage minds? (p. 33)

At another place he is determined to pluck the 'blood sucking, greedy, hungry and countless leeches' and ticks that are clinging to the body politic of the new born nation. He says :

Come let us pluck, twitch

And consign them to the blazing fire!

Let us, forth with, hold their

Eager, swollen lust

From diffusing abroad,

Lest it should consume everything! (p. 93)

One more striking feature of Bhatnagar is his blend rebellious and gloomy ideas in his delineation of nature. The poems 'Imperceptible', 'Gratefulness', 'Fascination', 'Untouched', 'One Sunday', 'Terror-struck', 'Emergency', 'Remain Watchful', 'Suddenly', 'Before the Rains', 'Inspiration : Son', 'Attention', 'Foggy Sky' and 'Charming Flowers' are fine instances of poet's artistic and meticulous approach to the dealing of Nature with a slight infusion of his gloom and rebellious ideas.

However the melody lying deeper in the entire social structure and in the human mind and the idiosyncrasies, desperation, hostility, cynicism, moral bankruptcy and intellectual depravity of man make the poet more and more theist and optimistic. His heart is always brimming with the gratitude and love. In the poem, 'Victory Ludorum', creating a paradox he shows the indifferent attitude of man towards the 'Dumb and Helpless' in the age of terror and moaning. In 'This Age' the poet ironically says :

The Guru-God, Allah's devotee

Celebrates

In the prayer house. (p. 69)

And on the other hand, in the poem 'Greatfulness' he feels extreme gratefulness of the Lord and says :

O, God!

I am grateful to you

Extremely

Grateful! (p. 65)

Actually, the philosophy of Bhatnagar is steeped in Indian soil. He is a man, truly humanist and lover of humanity at large. Dr. B.C.Dwivedi while writing on 'The New Horizon of Indian Humanism' selects two poets of Indian English Poetry, namely Mahendra Bhatnagar and D.C.Chambial whose poetry is an exhibition of Indian humanism. He says :

"Examples may be given of Indian Literature under the sway of modern poets like Mahendra Bhatnagar and D.C.Chambial whose poetry exhibits facets of Indian humanism from its core. In their vision and experience it is all the way a journey from the mundane to the cosmic with the sense of primacy of man changing its meaning in course of time."¹²

On account of being ingrained and fostered and nourished in Indian School of Philosophy, Mahendra Bhatnagar is essentially hopeful, bright and optimistic in his poems. In the poem 'Actually', he acknowledges the short span of man's life when he says :

Life has been spent

Learning life.

Vocal scares were lost

At soprano pitch

In learning the art of music. (p. 133)

Similarly in the poem, 'A Fact' Bhatnagar speaks the truth of life which is its transitoriness and ephemeral quality. In a jiffy every thing ceases to exist but the outlook of the poet is different when he says :

**But wait
Light will come
It will gush in
A new morrow.** (p. 135)

This optimistic quality when widens its wings from nation to the globe, a collection called *Poems : for a Better World* takes birth from the mighty pen of the poets like Mahendra Bhatnagar. As long as the decadence in ethics, morals, principles, human values and Self-respect will continue, the poets like Mahendra Bhatnagar will never resist and nor bow down against such demons but will fight with his mighty pen and will be the true leaders, reformer and torch-bearers of the civilization. His poetry will soar and the sing hymns of the Non-violence, human values of Love, Peace, Truth, Righteousness and nonviolence in new millennium and establish new horizons in our Literature.



References :

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- 2 B.C.Dwivedi, 'New Horizon in Indian humanism ; A comment', *Poetcrit.* July 2005, p. 40
- * *'Poems : For A Better World'*. New Delhi ; Lokvani Pub. 2006.

'POEMS : FOR A BETTER WORLD'

— *Dr. (Ms) Kalpana Rajput*

The life of man is a constant flux and is ever changing. In our society, in which immense social change is going on, new social problems have arisen and are seeking a solution. If we want to have a happier life, less of suffering, pain and strife to which we are subjected today, we should regenerate human values, truth, beauty, and social well being. Everybody, therefore, must rediscover for himself the meaning of life. Others can only help and guide but the efforts must be made by him individually and poetry is a rich medium to invoke and encourage the man to bear the testimonials of one's conscience. The progressive poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar strikes the soul in this scene. He is widely acknowledged poet basically composes lyrics in Hindi. His eighteen collections of poems in Hindi, seven volumes of English and one volume in French have been published. The present collection under review is an excellent (translated) version by Kedar Nath Sharma. The work of translation needs rare compatibility between language and sense and the translation of Bhatnagar's lyrics is an enjoyable exercise. Kedar Nath Sharma says :

"He is an etymologist who plays with Hindi language as deftly as a craftsman deals with his tools."

The translator's job is worth satisfying and convincing comprehending the exact meaning of Hindi poems. Bhatnagar's special priority to socio-economic themes and his approach to the themes are multidimensional. He has beautifully sung the songs of love, beauty, peace, harmony, dejection, agony, tyranny, non-violence, poverty and realism.

He has deep concern to the moral, ethical and eternal values of life but presently people are involved in harbingering the selfish-ends and vile bigotry and our country of ancient glorious culture is caught into tortuous troubles. In *'In The Grip of Terror'* he

feels sad at the altered state of India :

**engaged in
Cultivating newish culture vultures,
Devoted to
Peace and non-violence,
This country is now
Caught in tough mortification
And tortuous troubles.** (p. 19)

He boldly encourages the man to face the bigots and condemn the 'perverted religions' without having any fear of devastation. The poem 'Invoking the Modern Man' appeals to man's conscience to eradicate the narrow corridors of family, religion, caste, state and fake faiths where 'copious human blood' is shed immensely and to create a society of humanity 'having no religion, no caste, no geographical boundaries' and considered different languages and scripts as the accomplishment of human intellect. 'The Other Age', 'Atmosphere', 'Confidence of Victory', 'Dictum', 'Victor Ludorum', 'Terror Struck', 'Self-destruction', 'Unmasked', 'Tomfoolery', 'Trickery of Votes' and 'Terror and Anxiety' discuss the same theme.

He wishes to pluck the 'blood sucking, greedy, hungry, countless leeches and ticks' of Corruption, Orthodoxy, Falsehood, violence and Trickery from the body politic of new born Nation. In the poem 'Greetings' he greets the man to wean away the wickedness, animalism, tyranny and promote the mutual love, intellectualism and pure human consciousness as the main motto of human life. So in 'Dictum' he sings :

**Among the mankind
Let there be prosperity
Economic equality
All round permeable social equality.** (p. 47)

Amid the balderdashness of the current age, love and fascination still bloom and cherish in diverse ways. 'Suddenly', 'You' and 'Love' are his intense expressions of human love. In 'You' he shows the genuine and heart rending activities of a beloved :

**When you hum
Dialect poignant tunes
Of lovelorn songs**

Or sing sweet hymns

You look more pleasing. (p.)

'Charming Flowers', 'Before the Rains', 'Spring Air' and 'Foggy Sky' illustrate his love and longings for Nature.

Dr. Bhatnagar knows the art of exalting a poem even on a very simple theme by imparting to it a reflective cast of thoughts. Here is a poetry that not only charms and fascinates the reader's attention but it also stirs the soul to its depth. What he has expressed in the collection is a record of his being a socially conscious to the topry-turvy state of the nation spread around him to which he is keenly susceptible. Whatever he writes is transient and simple. His mastery of diction, style, imagery and above all his lyrical quality will not fail to inspire and motivate the new generation. His wide recognition as a social conscious poet instills new hope for the present collection. I hope for his love of life and conscious heart for the present scenario, the poems in the collection will certainly prove the 'poems for the better world'.

The Poetic Journey of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar

— Aju Mukhopadhyay

When Progressive Writers Association was born Mahendra Bhatnagar was a child but it influenced him much later. Then he witnessed the movement for the independence of the country, the Second World War and the days thereafter. The oppression of the poor and the down-trodden by the rich, exploitation of Indians by the British and then the days of communal riots and cruelty towards the concluding years of the freedom movement and the days thereafter cast a shadow in his mind. The tryst with the destiny shattered his dreams. Though he has remained an optimist on the whole, his optimism has not carried him much further. Though he wanted man to remain man beyond all fundamental superstitions and weaknesses, the cruelty and deception all around caused all wishful and wistful thinking pouring out from a benevolent heart as it was. But he is a lyrical poet shining more in nature and love poems.

Each man has some set ideas about the life and the world. For poets and writers this group of ideas may have different elevation and largeness but they too are guided by self-set ideas. Kedar Nath Sharma, who evaluated bhatnagar's poetic genius (in appendix) and introduced the subject of translating the book, has written that the poet has repeated his thoughts in the garb of different words in different poems. Bhatnagar, who has published 18 collections of his poems, which have been translated in different languages, has really such set ideas hovering round such subjects as human predicament, morality, Motherland, sympathy for the poor and love, often toned by nature. Sharma has rightly pointed out that there is a perpetual feud between optimism and pessimism in his poems. When he is very moral his poems are laboured pieces, not very spontaneous.

Though he rarely goes into the past, influence of his time

and back is often behind the making of his poems. He is very original in love and sometimes nature poems. They come out of his heart. These lines from his love poem, *Touch Stone* —

**'Were some sweet scented
Warm-ray of love
To touch me
Wax I am!'**

are really beautiful. Some such poems speak about the spring and its transient nature as in *Fascination*. In *Imperceptible / Untouched* he addresses the spring thus,

**'O,
rollicking, soporific
winds of spring
don't touch me like that
touch me not!'**

The poet is aware of his age, an octogenarian as he is, still the spring touches him though he can not respond in the same old way to it. In *One Sunday* —

**'The whole day passed away
as a long wait'
and in *Gratefulness* —
The day has declined,
it is evening,
deep darkness is surrounding ... '**

but he says to himself,
**'accept wholeheartedly this solitariness
with pleasure
o my mind!'**

In *Suddenly* —

**'Your memory flashed up today
and titillated my mind.'**

but he admits that
**'Age have gone by /
slowly, gradually, ...'**

In *Welcome* he welcomes his granddaughter, lanky and fresh, like a blooming orchid but is there a sigh behind this? Some nice and suggestive poems are, *People, A Truth, Before the Rains*. Such poems like *You* is nostalgic. A love springs up and fades.

The poet is very sympathetic for the poor and distressed for the labourers, as in *The Destitutes, Confident of Victory* and *Someone Unknown*. The moral degradation and religious perversion disturbs him much, as in *The Bigots, Corruption, The Macabre Leeches* and *Tics* but his wishful think-tank supplies the idea that all the swindlers have been unmasked, as in *Unmasked*. He ridicules such coined phrases and clichés as secularism, national integration and constitutional propriety and charges the leaders directly in his *Tomfoolery* —

**You being the proclaimed
architect of India's destiny
but what a mess you have made!**

In *Trickery of Votes* he has written that all hired people joined the party's procession in the mask of *Dalits*.

Terror strikes at his heart and he explodes in quite a few of his poems like In the *Circlip of Terror, Victor Ludorum, Terror Struck* and *Terror and Anxiety*.

The progressives call themselves progressive. A shadow of progressivism and benevolence makes him decry all religions, castes, even boundaries of countries; let the humans with the same qualities, needs and attributes be called only humans. '**Let us create our society / having no religion and no caste / and eradicate geographical boundaries of nations.**' (*Invoking Modern Man*) The same idea is expressed in *Whole World a Family, Realistic Ideal, Dictum* and *Confident of Victory*. He invokes the modern man to establish an egalitarian society where man progresses unhindered. He even vows to establish a paradise on earth (*Realistic Ideal*). But he forgets that progressives are creating and helping to create neo-caste-ism through reservation policy, that the dream of classless society has been shattered. Communists have come back to the fold of democracy and capitalism. A transformation is going on in human societies. While he invites a new seraph, a new prophet to establish '**a sublime human religion**' (*The Other Age*), he dreams man to remain agnostics (*Wishfulness*), invokes modern progressives. He prays for the good of humanity in large number of poems like *Aspiring Sun, Greetings, Determined, Welcome Twenty-first Century* and *A Welcome Moment*. It is apparent that

the poet is bewildered living in the present social and political atmosphere. Altruistic and benevolent ideas have made him simplistic. He forgets that each human being is a separate and different personality, that apparent equality of beings is an illusion, that caste-ism in its origin was based on different qualities in men, of the groups and that subtle differences are inherent in man by birth, as in different species of animals. He forgets that the castes were formed to demarcate the difference in human nature and to ascertain the division of labour. The idea was misused and misutilised in later ages. He forgets that human in all countries are divided whether by caste or by any other means.

Living through light and shade he came out of the penumbra on the threshold of the twenty-first century. He wished it ardently and living still he feels that his faith has been rewarded. '*Death stands vanquished / Life is triumphant.*

POEMS OF HOPE ['Poems : For A Better World']

— *Ashok K. Khanna*

Who of any consequence in today's world of poetry does not know Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar, prolific elder Hindi poet and educational administrator of Ujjain, Gwalior and also K.N. Sharma, the English translator, poet at Delhi. 'Poems : For A Better World' or shall we say poems of hope, of 'loss' of 'regain'. We know that poets are multilingual, they rue despair and also sing of hope. While going through the collection I was also reminded of a long poem titled 'Half A Century Later' of Dr. Wazir Agha of Pakistan and 'Wonderfilled Walking' a small collection of poems of Ritsuko Kawabata of Japan.

The book under report, comprises of 50 poems from 3 earlier Hindi poetry collections of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar as also a comprehensive write up on his poetry by K.N. Sharma. Though translating poetry is a difficult job, Sharma's English rendering, equally matches Dr. Bhatnagar's Hindi. Of late some noted translators have been translating Hindi (also vernacular) poetry into English reaching thereby wider readership, enriching Hindi, English poetry both. To reckon the poet's 6 volumes — '*Forty Poems*', '*After The Forty Poems*', '*Exuberance and other poems*', '*Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry*', '*Death-Perception : Life-Perception*', '*Passion and Compassion*' and now '*Poems : For A Better World*', translated by such renowned translators / poets like Dr. Ravinandan Sinha, Dr. D.C. Chambial, Dr. P. Aadeshwar Rao and Kedar Nath Sharma.

To give some flavour to the learned readers, it is desirable to quote lines from a few poems of the collection, viz :

' May new seraph, a new prophet, a new archangel / incarnate in the twenty first century / and establish / a sublime human religion! / Before reaching other worlds / human identity / should become confirmative!' (*The other Age*)

' Among the mankind / let there be prosperity. / economic equality, / all round permeable social equity!' (*Dictum*)

' Come / let us sing songs of hope / to blight the blues / and snuff out gloom. / Surely darkness will die!' (*Attention*)

' Let the flowers bloom / from hill to hill, over all deserts / in all jungles / myriad habitats, / every home / everywhere.' (*Charming Flowers*)

' May the coming century / imbue / the human mind / with the fresh rays of / tutelary genius!' (*Welcome Twenty First Century*)

' the new century / the twenty first century / has arrived . / We welcome it / with dedication / whole heartily!' (*A Welcome Moment*)

Again for worthy readers' sake it is also desirable to enumerate atleast titles of some other poems in the collection. Here are note worthy poems : 'Translation — A Conjunction', 'The Destitutes', 'Confident Of Victory', 'Unrequited Bestowal', 'Incomplete', 'Remain Watchful', ' Whole World A Family', 'Suddenly', 'Aspiration', 'Greetings', ' Realistic Ideal', 'Determined', etc. Critics in Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry shall find that his mind is that of a philosopher and his art that of a craftsman.

May I conclude this reviewette an appreciation wishing both Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar and Kedar Nath Sharma a long creative life so that they in turn enrich the world of Hindi, English poetry of India.



Poems : For A Better World

— Dr. Atma Ram

In this era of haste and speed when the entire world has been reduced to neighbours, mutual understanding and international peace are most important. Great literary art transcends all boundaries and barriers and influences the man in us all as nothing else does. It unites, it lifts, it inspires to hold our head high despite numerous obstacles and handicaps in the way. Thus 'translations' of good works, fine poetry from one language to another are quite helpful and significant — particularly at this stage of history when we have around 7,000 languages and, it is feared, that over half of them will die in 100 years. In this context, the book under reference, translation of Bhatnagar's brilliant Hindi poetry into English, the world language — characterised by fresh of approach and clarity of vision — is very revealing and helpful.

'Poems : For A Better World' comprises 50 shorter poems of Dr. Bhatnagar rendered into English by K.N. Sharma. In appendices, the translator also gives an elaborate critical evaluation of Prof. Mahendra Bhatnagar as a poet. (b. 1926) is a matured prolific and popular creative writer whose many poems have been published, broadcast and translated over the years. Seven volumes of translated poems have appeared in English, one in French. Besides the book under review, two others were ably translated by D.C. Chambial : 'Death-Perception : Life-Perception (2002), and 'A Handful Of Light' (2006).

The Better World volume begins with *'Translation — A Conjunction'* and suggest, the basic purpose of translations of works ... conjunction. It is therefore, distinguished and significant. The poet rightly observes :

**Translation is not
merely a change of language,
it is a conjunction.**

'In the circlip of terror' the naked dance of terror is described, whereas *'The Bigots'* paints a pen-picture of the bigots. In *'Wishfulness'*, he pleads for the world of *'agnostics but loving people.'* *'In 1986 A.D.'* constitutes a hard-hitting comment on intolerance and terrorism :

**This man / Shot dead / that one / with a bullet,
because / he / spoke / a different / language!**

Bhatnagar delineates modern man and wants him to rise above himself and consider man a citizen of the world. He laments for such an era where human beings are truly revered as the top-creation of God :

**When will that age come
when a human
will simply be called the human? ('The Other Age')**

Prof. Bhatnagar describes the plight of the poor and the cruelty of the so-called saviours of the nation and is sanguine of the redemption in the near future :

**Ah!
Whose catcall is it?
Eh
The public has awakened!
Let us buzz off! ('Atmosphere')**

He is full of fortitude and courage, the battle against social evils and exploitation, wire continue and will win in the long run :

**Eradicating every obstruction
our struggle will continue
ceaseless,
without fear,
without a halt.**

'The Destitutes' concentrates on what the poor really need for their uplift. The poet succinctly suggests five things, nothing else :

**They first need
deliverance from abuse,
and then
gracious dignity,
respectful two meals a day,
security and education.**

He, however, asks us to be careful and cautious in poem after poem.

We have to eradicate corruption, and persistently beware of the macabre leeches and trickery of votes. The poet insists :

Remain awake

till it is morning the world over! ('Remain Watchful')

In some other poems, Bhatnagar creates viable and vivid word-pictures of enchanting scenes of nature and lethargic leisure. Altogether, here is a tempting lure to go to the next poem. This poetry is simple and natural, with five distinctive features. First, the songs are at once short and the lines still shorter in length — but these are intensely evocative and effective. They invariably stir the reader's sensibility. May one say about Bhatnagar (as was said about Chaucer's Oxford Graduate) : " Few words he spoke yet none that were in vain." Second, the poet's sweep is very fast and varried. He treats numerous topics from personal, subjective to international level. He writes about the world, the nation and the individual with astounding detachment and passion. Third, his poetry is pithy and telling, at times epigrammatic in nature. This is because he scrupulously avoids the so-called high seriousness and heaviness of style. To him torrential or referential diction is not substantial, preferential or essential. Then, his is the poetry of candour and clarity, hope and optism. He seems to see a silver lining in various situations and persuades us to redeem them. His excessive use of sign of exclamation indicate this aspect. The poet, in essence is a dreamer to set things right and add admirably to the quality of life.

Finally, Bhatnagar's may contribute ritally to national integration and mutual understanding and amity among the peoples. Surely, art is not for the sake of art or morality; it is for the sake of life, life which is all one. No men are foreign, no countries strange. As such, these are superb poems for a happier world. The translator, himself a poet of high stature, with five excellent 'collections' of poems to his credit, has, indeed done a marvellous job here. His 'translation' is authentic and appropriate. I'm confident that the book will greatly interest and inspire poetry-lovers and general readers in both the languages — as the two versions are given side by side. Attractively brought out and beautifully printed, it is entirely free fom printing mistakes. ●

Mahendra Bhatnagar : A Poet of Passion and Compassion

— *Dr. Ram Sharma*

Mahendra Bhatnagar is the stalwart and an icon in the contemporary Hindi poetry. He has been writing poems for the last six decades. His translated poems have been compiled in seven volumes namely Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar (1968), After the Forty Poems (1979), Exuberance and other poems (2001), Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry (2002), Death-Perception : Life-Perception (2002), Passion and Compassion (2005), Poems : For A Better World (2006).

Born in the twenties of the previous century Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar started his writing at the prime of his youth, when he had not even crossed his teenage period.

According to William Words Worth "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." This is true about Dr. Bhatnagar's poetry. As the name indicates 'Passion and Compassion', his volume presents a thematic charm that leads us towards passion and compassion. This volume contains fifty poems and there are also fifty poems in his another volume 'Poems : For A Better World'.

He was ransacked by the cross-currents of social unrest and religious fanaticism the poet's mind was searching a set of volumes that would build up peace and tranquility.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar in his poetry 'Passion and Compassion', 'Poems : For A Better World' has developed certain new ideas on love and life together that are somewhat parallel to the classical theory of this concept. He has mixed love with passion, compassion, relation, life, divinity, regeneration and many other values.

All things are forgotten ...

Except

**Those moments of passion
Soaked in intimacy
And those experienced moments
Of the blazing flames of relationships!**

('Passion and Compassion' : p. 2)

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has very meticulously selected words and invariably these words are developed in the form of powerful symbols or images. He presents word pictures in his poem 'Foggy Sky' :

**It is late in the day
Yet the sky is lolling lazily,
Simply snoozy / it betrays no stimulus
Feigning excessive cold
it drools like a dunce!**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 125)

Nature is invariably a back drop in Bhatnagar's poetry but it is moot by used to explore the beautiful scene of nature in the poem 'Charming flowers'.

**Let these flowers bloom,
from hill to hill, over all deserts,
in all jungles / myriad habitats
every home, / every where.**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 131)

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has presented Nature in Words worthian manner. He has presented the beautiful season of spring in his poem 'Spring air'.

**Blowing my mind
blew the indolent air
Captivatingly
Never I had felt it
so pleasing ever before.**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 123)

Again he presented a beautiful scene of rainy season in the poem 'Before the Rains' :

**A dense black cloud,
a sable cloud
has overcast the sky today.**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 105)

The poet is in utter dilemma about the future happenings.

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He finds that his mind is deadened to all sensations. In his poem 'Sensibility' he has presented these emotions .

**Alas, had I cleansed my face with tears,
Had I sown the seeds of love in my mind.
Had I lost my joy and wealth
For the wellbeing of the unfortunate humanity!**

('Passion and Compassion' : p. 86)

The poet laments the decline of the age and mankind in his poem 'In the circle of Terror' :

**It's caught in the snares of
clever and cunning gangs;
is stuck in the quagmire of
vile bigotry and despicable caste-ism.
It is grappling with a menacing savagery.**

A country

**which cultivated interpersonal relations and friends
indulged in dreams and aspirations
is now enmeshed in horrible terror.**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 19)

Dr. Bhatnagar never tried to present deep reality and he has never presented a dreaming vision. He has imaginations and wishes about the future of mankind in his poem 'The Other Age' :

**Break
the artificial boundaries of the nations.
Break
the irrelevant, superficial and orthodox faiths,
Break
the divisive regimes of castes and sub-castes.**

('Poems For A Better World' : p. 35)

Dr. Bhatnagar is a poet of positive state of mind. However negative there may be a situation, he will perceive the end in a positive way — always a journey towards life not death, towards happy ending not catastrophe. He has presented future vision in his poem 'Dictum' :

**Folly, mere folly
ignorance profound !
Set free / life and man from it;
mankind be saved from
the wicked, spiteful**

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**religious zealots!
May the hiatus
vanish once for all!
Let invincible and rare aptitude
be endowed upon the oppressed!
Among the mankind
let there be prosperity,
economic equality,
all round permeable social equity!**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 47)

Dr. Bhatnagar is moved and immensely pained to see the flight of suffering man. There are several poems which poetry the stark realities of life. Just like the poem 'Terror Struck' presents the stark reality :

**It seems
the brutal barbarians
have again killed innocent people / rapaciously
have mercilessly done to death
nightly.
Deafening the silence
the religious slogan has again / echoed!
Danger,
deadly danger prevails!**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 71)

**How much the man
Has become selfish!
He is happy
Getting a little profit
By selling his integrity!**

('Surprise' / 'Passion and Compassion' : p. 98)

Everywhere there is the sense of betrayal and loss rootlessness, loneliness and deep isolation. He has presented this scene in his poem 'Usurpers' :

**Rascals —
They are ready
To deceive
To cheat the weak
And the straight-forward!**

('Passion and Compassion' : p. 104)

In an age of dehumanization, when machines have made life too much mechanical, human values have diminished and man has been reduced to status lower than machine. The poet laments the rise of many other anti-humanistic currents in the society in the poem 'To The Hawker' :

**Ah, what
day after day
you deliver
blood smeared newspaper
at my door!**

('Poems : For A Better World' : p. 75)

Dr. Bhatnagar creates emotions and engulfs us in them in his volume 'Poems : For A Better World' :

**We are bursting hand grenades on ourselves
In a fit of madness
we are mining our own houses
and igniting them
to maim our own people.
We ourselves
are discarding human attributes
have dehumanized ourselves
and roar / to annihilate
our own clan!**

('Poems : For A Better World' ; p. 77)

There is certainly a fusion of passion and compassion in Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry. These poems lead to tranquility of the mind of the reader. His poems are highly pictorial, energised with powerful symbols and enjoyable imagery.

Translators have also tried their best to present the original sense, rhythm, resonance and poetic diction.



References :

Dr. B. C. Dwivedy : Living Through Challenges : A Study of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry (Delhi : Sanjay Prakashan, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi — 2)

Mahendra Bhatnagar : The Poet A Critique of His Later Poems

— Dr. A.K. Chaturvedi

Later poems of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar reflect poet's concern for the future of the modern world dominated by the diffident, depressed, selfish, lazy, pessimistic, intolerant and corrupt people. These poems are a treasure of poet's sublime and revolutionary thoughts, sharp reactions and fresh viewpoints. They touch upon a variety of topics covering a wide spectrum of issues relating to language, society, humanity, religion, casteism, terrorism, corruption, poverty, philosophy, politics and so on and so forth. An under-current of poet's deep concern for the betterment of the prevailing conditions of native country as well as of the entire world runs throughout these poems.

The poem entitled '**Translation : A Conjunction**' represents a fresh approach to translation, rarely attempted by any other poet. In the poem the poet has literally defined the term 'translation' as a bridge between two minds, a means of cementing a firm friendship in a mutual interest, a means of communication among millions of mankind, a way of surmounting deep gorges built among men of distant nations, a symbol of consciousness, and lastly a celestial body of human sagacity. Poet's anguish at the deplorable conditions India is currently in the grip of is the focal point of his next poem titled '**In the Circlip of Terror**'. A sharp contrast between the past India with a rich culture of intimate relationships, dreams and inspirations and the present day India caught in the grip of the gangs of conspirators, bigots, casteists and terrorists shows poet's nostalgia for the glorious past of the country. However, the poem reflects poet's pessimistic and one-sided approach to reality. The poem '**Bigot**' gives vent to poet's deep concern for the future of modern world that is undergoing the threat of victimization in the name of religion. Towards the end of the poem the poet grows optimistic

about the future of modern man. In another poem the poet has painted a world of his dreams — a world that should have :

**No temples
no mosques
no gurudwaras
no churches.** (*'Wishfulness'*)

Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry contains a note of humanitarianism, universality and all-pervasiveness. His love for mankind stirs him to visualize a world where only loving people are living with peace and love. Going ahead with his all-pervasive approach the poet in his poem '**Invoking Modern Man**' has exhorted modern man to come out of the boundaries of castes and religions and build a classless and casteless society. The poem '**The Other Age**' underlines the need of the incarnation of an archangel or a prophet who can eliminate the divisions of humanity and establish a supreme human religion.

As a poet Mahendra Bhatnagar's creditable contribution to the cause of humanity is the portrayal of the problems and challenges confronting the weaker sections of society. According to him, life for the poverty-stricken people is not a bed of roses or a pleasant dream; it is a tale of melancholy and despondency. The way he has highlighted the hardships of the poor gives the impression that he has either faced the bitterness of poverty himself or minutely and deeply studied the struggles that are always in store for the poor. The poem gives the message that the struggles lead to sublimity as opposed to the luxuries that lead to depravity. In his poem '**Atmosphere**' the poet has attacked the modern politicians, bureaucrats and contractors. Targeting the nexus between them he outpours his anguish at their corrupt activities in these lines :

**Their stratagems galore
render the administration helpless
and the common man hapless.
These notorious swindlers
are wicked crooks
the condemnable rogues!**

Another characteristic feature of Dr. Bhatnagar's poetry is that it is intact from the traces of narrowness. It has universal appeal and touches upon the issues of global importance. The poem '**Confident of Victory**' talks of the fight spearheaded by the oppressed against the oppressors across the globe. In another poem titled '**Dictum**' he calls for the elimination of discrimination and establishment of human integration. His concern for the establishment of the global identity of man is reflected in these lines :

**Human recognition
should not be due to
the states and nations,
languages and dresses.
The human being
should only be known by his
body and mind
sagacity bred of
experience and deep thinking.**

Since a poet possesses the ability to create his own world, he does not need any person or thing to fall back on for relief during the period of solitude. In the poem '**One Sunday**' the poet gloomily talks of his solitude :

**No one unexpected came,
none unwanted too encountered.**

In the next poem '**Gracefulness**' the poet reconciles himself to his solitude and asks his mind to accept loneliness with pleasure as a gift from God.

Dr. Bhatnagar has devoted some of his poems to the portrayal of the condemnable acts of terror and violence committed by the so-called fanatics in the name of religion. These poems serve as a medium of the expression of poet's anguish at the perpetration of cruelties and atrocities particularly against those who are helpless and innocent. The poems '**Some Unknown**' and '**Self Destruction**' are fully devoted to the depiction of the pathetic condition of the victims of violence and the violent activities of the fanatics who have gone mad, uncivil and barbaric. The poem '**Someone Unknown**' portrays the heart-melting condition of a victim of violence in a touching manner :

**One man, hunched, gloomy
wreathing in pain
leading a devastated life
has passed away!
One man, hunchbacked, distressed,
injured and blood smeared
crying, seeking shelter
has just now passed away!**

The poem '**Self Destruction**' serves as a warning bell to the perpetrators of violence. It sternly warns them against the heavy price their own people will have to pay if they do not shun the path of violence.

Poetry represents the milieu in which it is created and mirrors the prevailing conditions. Dr. Bhatnagar's poem '**People**' holds mirror to the present day world inhabited by the people running madly and aimlessly after the crowd. See how he has pictured the condition of modern men :

**People are following
their flock,
They know not
their aim
are ignorant
completely deprived.**

Another poem '**Corruption**' is a reflection of the modern society dominated by the corrupt people. The following lines of the poem reveal poet's sharp reaction to corruption :

**Corruption is rampant
and is rife like weeds
overgrown everywhere.**

The poet is pained to see the dominance of the feelings of angst and anger in the heart of modern man. He voices his agony in these lines :

**Extreme constriction
has palsied lips
hands and feet have been immobilized,
angst reigns
humanity seethes with anger.**

('Terror and Anxiety')

For the poet who has been a teacher by profession poetry is subservient to his mission of teaching humanity the lesson of self-confidence, fortitude, humanism and patriotism. Through his poetry Dr. Bhatnagar has exhorted the modern man never to succumb to the power of blood sucking leeches, tormentors, criminals, terrorists and fanatics. Some of his poems are devoted to his mission of awakening people to the fatal consequences that are awaiting society if they remain a mute spectator to the cruelties and destructive activities of the traitors and anti-social elements.

Dr. Bhatnagar is undoubtedly a revolutionary poet. He is averse to the idea of remaining indifferent and neutral to the naked dance of bigotry, intolerance, obscenity, terrorism and barbarism. He has used his pen as a sword to attack those who indulge in these activities. The following lines highlight his revolutionary campaign against the enemies of humanity :

**Come, let us pluck, twitch
and consign them to the blazing fire!
Let us, forthwith, hold their
eager, swollen lust
from diffusing abroad,
lest it should consume everything!**

('The Macabre Leeches and Tricks')

In his poem titled '**Tomfoolery**' the poet has made the modern politicians the target of his attack. Lashing out at them he says :

**You being the proclaimed
architect of India's destiny
we had expected from you
some value added fruitage
but what a mess you have made!
What a tomfoolery
and a gloomy mishmash!
What sort of democratic rigmarole is it?
It is an affront and a rebuff
to the public!**

The poem '**Trickery of Votes**' marks the continuation of

poet's crusade against the evils of the current politics of India. The poem shows that the poet is aware of the nasty tricks that the politicians play for success in the mobilization of the innocent voters in their favour. The poem begins with the description of a grand procession of the *Dalits* and ends with a hard hitting ridicule at the absence of the members of the *Dalit* community in the procession.

A blend of pessimism and optimism is one of the striking features of Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry. The gloomy atmosphere created by the beginning and middle parts of the poem is replaced by the atmosphere of hope and positiveness in the end. The poems '**Emergency**' and '**Attention**' are the glaring examples of the blend of the pessimistic and optimistic approaches to reality. The poet is at the peak of pessimism when he says :

**Darkness and despondency pervade!
Intense melancholy!
Utter hopelessness
has seized the entire universe,
and bogged it down
completely ...**

('Attention')

The following stanza occurring at the end of the poem is marked with extreme optimism :

**Come let us sing songs of hope
to blight the blues
and snuff out gloom.
Surely darkness will die!**

('Attention')

The poet outpours his pessimistic thoughts in the first two stanzas of the poem '**Emergency**'. The last two stanzas of his poem are marked with extreme optimism. His poem '**Determined**' is different from the poems '**Emergency**' and '**Attention**' in so far as his approach to human life is concerned. Whereas in '**Emergency**' and '**Attention**' the poet grows optimistic towards the end, he is optimistic and self-confident throughout the poem '**Determined**', remaining completely untouched by any trace of pessimism.

Dr. Bhatnagar is a true worshipper of humanity and as such aspires for nothing in the new century except for mankind's tri-

umph over savagery. In the poem '**Greetings**' he has given vent to his inherent desire to see a better world — a world dominated by the kind and loving people. The following lines give expression to his aspiration for victory of love over hatred :

**May every person discard vileness,
have mutual love and fellow feelings
and be an intellectualist.**

The poem '**Realistic Ideal**' has parallelism with the poem '**Gracefulness**' in so far as poet's desire to see a better world is concerned. Herein he expresses his determination to rid society of its ills and change the world into paradise.

Social reform is one of the objectives that a great poet wants to achieve through his poetry. Mahendra Bhatnagar is not an exception to this fact. As a social poet he is fully aware of the fact that the exposition of the social evils is a must for their cure, just as a proper diagnosis of a malady is a pre-requisite for its remedy. His zest for social reform is evident from his exposition of the evils such as discrimination in the name of religion, caste and creed, double standards, misuse of power, commercialization of religion, mad race for power and pelf, criminalization of politics and so on and so forth. The poet is bold and fearless in attacking those who fulfill their selfish ends by abetting these evils.

Mahendra Bhatnagar may be compared to John Keats in so far as the treatment of nature in his poetry is concerned. Like John Keats he has sensualized nature. The touch of the spring air gives him the sensual pleasure that he never experienced in the past. The poem '**Spring Air**' begins with a note of sensuousness and ends with the hallucinating effect of the spring air. The fog, unlike the spring air, is tormenting to the poet. In the poem '**The Foggy Sky**' the poet expresses his displeasure at its presence in the sky till late in the day :

**It is late in the day
yet the sky is lolling lazily
simply snoozy
it betrays no stimulus.
Feigning excessive cold**

it drools like a dunce.

His description of nature is not confined to the spring air and fog. His charming poem titled '**Charming Flowers**' shows his Keatsian obsession with the smell and beauty of flowers. The fragrance of the flowers has spread from his dwelling place to the far off places and has permeated the whole world.

The poems '**Actually**' and '**A Fact**' reveal Mahendra Bhatnagar's philosophy of life. For him, as for a realist, life is a saga of losses and gains, problems and solutions; it is a continuous process of learning. In both these poems the poet has philosophized on the fast pace of time and has presented life as a puppet in its powerful hand. Following his characteristic style, the poet begins the poem '**A Fact**' in a pessimistic mood and jumps to the zenith of optimism in the last lines quoted below :

**But wait
light will come
it will gush in
a new morrow.**

The figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, alliteration and personification, though seldom used, add to the beauty of language. The rhyme scheme is, at places, very attractive and praiseworthy. The ending words of a majority of his stanzas rhyme with each other giving a musical touch to his poetry.

'A Handful Of Light'
Ushering In Light And Life

— **Dr. Atma Ram**

It is with great pleasure that I write this introduction to the beautiful anthology of poems written by celebrated author and translated from Hindi by a great poet and editor. Besides, both are teachers and research guides of a long standing. Prof. Mahendra Bhatnagar has written extensively in Hindi over the years. His poetry has been translated, published and broadcast in several foreign and Indian languages : seven volumes of translated poems in English, one in French. *'A Handful Of Light'* is a splendid 'collection' of his eighty poems rendered into English by Dr. D. C. Chambial.

Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems in the anthology are simple, short yet evocative and gripping in effect. No line, in general, contains more than five words — but the impact is direct and lasting. In *'Even Then'* the host asks, in run-on lines :

**You, the dear one,
a visitor!
Say —
Have I not been
a receptionist of yours
as ever?**

In *'From The Valley Of Patalpani'*, the poet himself is a visitor to the beautiful dale and wishes to remain there for sometime. The language is pithy and revealing. For instance, such lines :

**O deep dale!
I 've come ..
your life
an everlasting companion!
Let me hold
for a few moments**

**the helpless emotional tide
with your innocent flow.**

In the same way, the poet portrays enchanting natural scenes in poems such as *'The Wintry Sun'* and in *'An Evening At Tighira'* (two sketches).

However, it is in poems with philosophical tones and twists that he impresses us the most. Very ordinary and common place ideas at times are taken up and treated artistically within the ringfence of an idea. For example, he wonders :

**Who
has with devastating hurricane's speed
defeated
the sky-scraping high summits
of our iron faith?**

The poet is sad in *'For Me Alone'*, and discovers in *'Easy : Difficult'* that life is hard to lead and actually live. Lines, many times may appear downright simple and ordinary — yet there great depths are astire. Here is a telling example :

**It is easy
simply to pass a day,
difficult to live!**

In another piece, Mahendra Bhatnagar woefully laments the loss of past year, and, resigned, looks before and after :

**Eh, many a year
of life
fluttered away
before long! ('Retrospection')**

In *'Repentance'* he takes up the same theme but imparts it greater sweep and depth. He feels mere spending days and nights is not real living. Thus he exclaims :

**Lo!
I 've spent life
laughing and weeping
but could not live!**

He, therefore, longs for sweetness and light in life, at least a bit of it. The wish is genuine, felt down deep in the heart. He begs alms, wants to be far from the sphere of sorrow :

**Give me
a handful of light!**

Mahendra Bhatnagar finely moves from theme to theme in his short and straight-forward poems and usually encompasses a vast vista of experience, Whereas in '*Horried*' he pinpoints a terrible picture of man and his activities, in '*Committed*' he hastens to challenge the situation and improve upon the condition. He asserts with a force of conviction :

**We're committed
to a righteous system,
ready to alter
the horrified world.**

He reflects deeply on life and its purpose in his poetry. He discovers mere tension to be the essence of existence. While employing very common and ordinary words and idioms, he communicates its futility, the fever and the fret. He succinctly concludes :

**Life ...
A stasis
sourceless.
Sore wound
unwanted *sannyas*,
Mere tension!**

By using only a few (fit though few) terse and telling words, the miserable plight of the down-trodden has been so adequately conveyed in '*A Tragedy*' :

**Was poor
Was untouchable
Feared!**

The poet, in another poem, holds that things will surely change for the better. He remarks :

**Several centuries
have endured
the slavery of barbarity,
but now
it won't be!**

He finds a distinct sense of incompatibility in the nurture and conduct of man in the present era. We continue to be slaves of

superstitions and dogma, though we claim to be learned and forward. He candidly observes :

**Our old orthodox thinking
our fatalistic philosophy
pushes us
back ... back ... back
in the past
far in the past
in the untimely dead past.**

Mahendra Bhatnagar, thus, relates intensely real life, to its bright and dark spectrums. A handful of bright light is thrown on various themes and scenes so as to make them vibrate with life. In some cases echoes of poetic lines in English and Hindi literatures are evident. But everything seems to have passed through the crucible of imagination — the poet writes with outstanding ease and spontaneity. Sometimes tones of irony are implicit but never imposing. Whom do we continue to worship in the modern age of science and knowledge? God? No, as the poet hints at clearly :

**Where is
the New Man
of the New Age?
Our sense is stupefied
to see the stupid priests
being worshipped!**

He sincerely pleads for mutual understanding, cooperation and goodwill in '*Co-operation*', and '*In Expectation*'.

True art transcends the boundaries of nations and climes, and is, the essence, for the instruction and entertainment of mankind. As such, translations from one to other languages, especially to the world language like English, are most essential. In this, Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar is in a very enviable position — here is a first rater, seasoned Hindi poet in the company of veteran translators — D. C. Chambial and Kedar Nath Sharma, perceptive poets in English, in their own right. (Kedar Nath Sharma earlier ably rendered Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems in English collected in '**Poems : For A Better World**' (2006), whereas D. C. Chambial translated so well his another excellent volume, '**Death-Perception : Life-Per-**

ception' (2002).

Here Dr. Chambial's rendering is straight and poetic. He has presented appropriate and effective translation. The task was indeed, quite formidable for Chambial and Sharma. English, we all know, belongs to the Centum group of languages, while Indian languages (including Hindi) originate from the Satam branch of languages. There exist certain inherent differences. However, Mahendra Bhatnagar scrupulously avoids bombastic or heavy style of writing. His poetry flows naturally like a stream, comes like leaves to a tree. Chambial often catches its spirit and incorporates it in English language.

In the world of today, when we have around 7,000 languages, 'translations' of creative writings in different languages is most essential for national integration and international understanding — since true art always unites us. Dr. Bhatnagar aptly points out (in '**Poems : For A Better World**') :

**Translation is a means of communication
among millions of mankind.
Translation is not
a mere change of language
but is a successful conversion.**

That is why 'translations' is often kept as the major theme in most of the national and World Book Fairs. In this context, Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry and Chambial's endeavour at translation are quite praise-worthy.

One feels that '**A HANDFUL OF LIGHT**' will generate much sweetness and light in the literary world, and readers will greatly appreciate and enjoy the poems in both the languages.



'LYRIC-LUTE' — A Foreword

— *Dr. Moh Dutt Sathi*

'There is nothing like poetry' — says a gentleman who may be anyone, you or I. It may be added to this remark any amount of things, but this is certain that that is not poetry if it touches not. An explanation of 'Touches' may be given in its working and effects. The poetry touches the human feelings, passions, emotions and so on. All the soft and tender evolutions and revolutions of emotional channel of human beings are charged and surcharged by poetry. This may be a layman's assessment but what the wise men say. They may use a different vocabulary more bulky and verbose to prove their point.

Poetry not only charges and surcharges the human emotional channel but it also reaches to the intellectual peak of human view point. Can there be any match with the dry precepts of philosophy or analytical proceedings of human mind? I say no. There is the superiority of poetry over all the sciences whatever they may be or prove by their scientific methods or laboratory tests. Even computerized way of doing the things cannot and should overcome the poetry because the human element may lack in any sophisticated machinery of the future.

But howsoever and whatsoever way, we may define, explain and exhort the poetry, one should remember that it touches not in a wider sense. Many of the so-called poems fly over our heads like dry clouds which don't rain in meaning and the human spirit remains parched and thirsty. Each tint and sweetness of language may not reflect the true sense and meaning contained in the poem, although it is supposed that some sort of tint and sweetness of language is the necessary part and soul of the poem. These are sure accessories of touching the human emotional channel and vibrating the strings of soul.

A good poet should stand this acid test of poetry. To my

knowledge and belief, one such is a Hindi poet *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar*, whose works have been published in seven volumes entitled '*Mahendra Bhatnagar-Samgra*'. His collection of Hindi songs '*LYRIC-LUTE*' has been translated into English by two extraordinary brilliant scholars of poetry and critics namely *Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh* and *Dr. (Ms.) Kalpana Rajput*. There are some poems, and, as the title suggests, lyrics echo in the minds like the sweet sound of 'lute'. It is acknowledged that *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar* has been composing poems since 1941 and still he is moving along the path of poetry.

The poems of '*Lyric-Lute*' collection touch many fields and spheres of romanticism, mysticism, humanism and a wider perception of human society. In spite of all those glaring facts of life, his poems mainly concern 'himself'. He has own view point in looking at certain things. His joys and sorrows and pleasant and unpleasant experiences of life have enriched his poetry. He is sad but not disappointed. Optimism is the basic structure of his creativity. Nature is not nature in narrower sense in his poetry but the 'Moon' is always there in his night paintings.

It is a real pleasure in going through the poems of this collection. I feel highly honoured in doing so specially, in the fact that *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar* has chosen me for this purpose. I must congratulate him for the joy he has given to me and hope the readers would enjoy the perusal of this collection in the same way and spirit.



The Poet As Critical Insider

– *Dr. Shubha Dwivedi*

Professor Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of the leading Hindi poets of the last century. He has authored more than one dozen books of poems in Hindi; about half a dozen of which have been translated into English & French. He is a poet of name and fame. He has developed a special kind of critical consciousness found only in eminent Hindi poets. He deals with tradition, civilization and culture and social milieu as a critical insider. I personally feel that a poet must reveal critical insidedness in order to become a significant poet. I have no doubt that *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar* has shown this quality in his poetic journey from beginning to end. He is deeply rooted in India and its provinces and cities. He was born in Jhansi (Uttar-Pradesh) at his maternal grandfather's residence on 26 June 1926. He is exposed both to the Eastern tradition and to the western tradition. This situation is very critical indeed and instils a creative and critical instinct in the writers simultaneously. Existentially, it is not a very happy situation but sensitive poets cannot escape such situation. Nirala, the well-known Hindi poet too, looked both inside and outside. Shelley was in such a mood when he wrote :

*We look before and after
And pine for what is not
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught
Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thoughts.*

Like the English poet Browning he is a staunch

optimist. He churns the ocean in order to get nectar. Though there are tears in his eyes, there are songs on his lips. Poems collected in 'Forty Poems' can be mentioned here : 'Lust for Life', 'Reap the Paddy', 'O Wind', 'The Splendour of the Earth', 'Woman Reborn', 'Youth', 'Lose Not Your Heart', 'Suffering' are expression of a heart and mind which has experienced both joys and sorrows of life. Other poems of the volume 'Dilemma', 'Vision', 'The Beauty of the Sleeping Moon', 'Who Are You', 'Light The Lamp', 'To The Moon', 'Moon Light', 'State of Night', 'The Firmament Will Change Its Colour' are remarkable poems of this volume which offer us a good criticism of life demonstrating sense of Truth, Beauty, Goodness and Loveliness. The poet sees a ray of hope in state of hopelessness. All the forty poems of this volume are marked by a positive quality and personal signature of the poet. He is worried about the pathetic and tragic condition of Man in 20th Century. The proper study of mankind in Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is man. He is fundamentally historical and writes about the historical reality of *Man*.

According to Mahendra Bhatnagar Man is in the centre of this universe. He is the prince of this cosmos. He is the creator of all values. His poems 'The Future' and 'The Conviction' confirm this. He wants to understand the world as per the study of Man. He has immense faith in the creativity of Man. His books of poems tell us that man was important in the past, he is important today and he will remain important in future. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a significant poet of freedom, creativity and human values. Without human freedom, creativity and love mankind will perish. His short poem 'Desire Fulfilled' deserves to be quoted :

**Hey, Ho! What an applause I got,
Life-long only deep distress I got!
There remained a lot of wealth of pain
Sure enough, life burdensome I got!**

(Desire Fulfilled', Tr. Dr. H.C. Gupta, Vol. 4, p. 133)

Surely these are the lines born out of existentialism. The poet's existence is threatened and therefore, he cries. He finds himself in a perpetual tight corner. Mahendra Bhatnagar's sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts, situations and feelings. The poems often come out of the depths as it were. The poet has developed a mode which may be called poetic humanism or creative humanism. The Nirvana of the poet lies in creative freedom and creative humanism. He has nothing to do with God, divinity or eternity. He believes in Man who is a historical and geographical entity. Mahendra Bhatnagar is a living poet who writes about living Man in a living nation both of which cannot be suppressed either by the foreigners or Multi-National Companies. His poems compel us to think about Indian Poetry and Tradition afresh.

Mahendra Bhatnagar belongs to the glorious progressive tradition of Indian poetry. His poetry protests against the rotten and decadent culture. The whole Hindi world respects him as a senior poet. His poetry combines the progressive tradition and folk tradition. His poems must be read closely to experience the feelings of his folk idioms which give freshness and blood to his creative humanism. His poem 'A Longing' would testify our point :

**Were it but once
that we felt ourselves risen to eminence;
tho' for moments a few.
Were it but once
that we might live**

life natural
putting off the mask
 of smile artificial,
Pining boundless is Man
for hearty boisterous laughter!
Were it but once
face to face
With the self's expansion,
how narrow minded is Man
unfamiliar with benevolence!
In darkness filled mind
once at least
lightning could flash,
how costly has become
 cost of light!
Only playing is
each man a jester's role
of a miser money-lender!
If only once we
our dwarfishness
our meanness
could abandon
and could experience jubilation
of getting on the summit!
 If only once just once we
 though
 for moments a few,
 had sensation of being atop!

('A Poem-Prayer', Tr. Dr. H.C.Gupta, Vol. 4, p. 93)

These are powerful lines from the pen of a powerful poet. It is in such poems that he is at his best redefining tradition, creativity, freedom and modernity. The lines break the condition of statusquo, amnesia, stagnation and exploitation.

To sum up, the poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar sensibly and sensitively bring out in this era of Globalisation, moral degeneration, environmental pollution and disillusion. The poet initially finds himself a misfit in a capitalistic

society, but he fights like a brave soldier to break the condition of amnesia and darkness. The chief quality of Mahendra Bhatnagar lies in his belief, to borrow the words of Shelley 'If winter comes can spring be far behind?' The poet's head is bleeding, yet it is held high. His poetry is full of heat and energy, emotional outbursts and robust optimism. No reader can miss the poetic and creative humanism of Mahendra Bhatnagar. It offers the visions of ideal Beauty and ideal love. His poetry has the capacity to lift mankind. He must be acknowledged an 'unacknowledged legislator' of mankind and his poetical works clearly go to prove it. He is the philosophical interpreter of common life, common places and common emotions. His poetry is based on equality, liberty, fraternity, freedom, love and unity.

In a typical Mahendra Bhatnagar Poem felt ideas are more important than perceived images. He is, more a poet of ideas than of images. He is an intellectual and a professor of poetry; and it is quite in the fitness of things that he analyses, interprets and evaluates his emotions. As a poet he aims for high. He is a visionary. The essence of his art is genuine, much deeper, more significant and more spiritual. He has taken his poetic art quite seriously. It is better to read Mahendra Bhatnagar as a critical insider who has emerged as a significant poet on the strength of his more than dozen books of poems.

To conclude, Professor Mahendra Bhatnagar occupies an important place in Indian Poetry. He has rightly emerged as the guilty conscience of his age. His poetry shows his deeper social, moral and ethical concerns. He belongs to the glorious Progressive Traditions of Hindi poetry. He is a sympathiser with the heart of a socialist. His genuine

love for the poor people of India cannot be denied. His poems show a genuine rhythm . He has a fine ear for music and language. The most important thing about his poetry is that he has also written in the language of the common people. He knows the life, the songs, types, qualities, joys and aspirations of the common people of India We should not forget that his poetry contains the rebellious voice of a social reformer who has chosen to be a critical insider. He is a poet with a difference and that is his strength. He raises a voice against bureaucratisation, exploitation, corruption and rampant political and business trickeries. His poetic career appears as a whole. He has emerged as a friend of the poor people. Several poems by Mahendra Bhatnagar confirm this belief. He shows deep faith in the goodness, decency and endurance of the common people. His poems gather the collective wisdom of the people. Such wisdom comes out of his felt experiences as a common man and a critical insider. His books are in the ultimate sense, criticism of social, political and democratic life of India.



DR. MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR :
UN POÈTE INDIEN ET MODERNE

French translations by Mrs. Purnima Ray (Burdwan : W. B.)



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INTRODUCTION

C'est un plaisir pour moi de rédiger une introduction à la section française comprenant des articles et des comptes rendus consacrés à la poésie de Mahendra Bhatnagar, écrivain hindi de l'Inde contemporaine. Cette partie regroupant des écrits de nos collègues des Centres de langue française en Inde, porte sur différents aspects de la poésie bhatnagarienne.

Je suis contente que la présente publication voie le jour à un moment où le monde entier commence à s'intéresser à la littérature indienne de façon plus réaliste, à mieux comprendre ce pays dans la diversité de ses religions, de ses cultures régionales. La culture indienne ne peut être décrite comme une culture monolithique, « hindoue », qui ne prenne pas en compte une immense variété de croyances, de cultes, de légendes et de modes d'expression.

Si Mahendra Bhatnagar a réussi à décrire les conditions de vie de l'Inde contemporaine, c'est sans doute parce que son histoire personnelle l'a mis en contact avec de multiples facettes de la complexité indienne. Il est né à Jhansi, dans l'état de l'Uttar Pradesh, en 1926. Dès son jeune âge, il a démontré son intérêt pour les études littéraires. Il a excellé dans la vie académique et a obtenu le diplôme de MA en littérature hindi en 1948 de Gwalior. En 1957, il a défendu sa thèse doctorale en littérature hindi, à l'université de Gwalior. Il a enseigné à plusieurs endroits à différents niveaux : D'abord comme maître d'école secondaire à Bundelkhand et à Malwa et ensuite comme professeur à l'université de Gwalior. En

1978, il a été sélectionné pour le poste de professeur pour enseigner la littérature hindi à l'université de Tachkant, mais à cause des contraintes institutionnelles, il n'a pas pu y travailler. Il a pris sa retraite en tant que professeur en 1984. Membre de plusieurs instituts littéraires de grand renom en Inde et rédacteur en chef de deux revues littéraires (*Sandhya*, *Pratikalpa*), il a rédigé plus d'une centaine de poèmes en hindi dont certains ont été traduits en français et en anglais.

L'œuvre de Mahendra Bhatnagar est peu connue des lecteurs francophones. La seule publication disponible est : *A Modern Indian Poet : Dr Mahendra Bhatnagar*. Il s'agit d'un recueil de poèmes hindi traduits en anglais ainsi qu'en français. Je trouve que la publication de ce livre mérite une mention spéciale car à l'heure actuelle, il existe très peu de traductions de la poésie indienne en français. On pourrait citer à juste titre, K. Satchidanandan : « Les traductions de la poésie sont plus faiblement encore représentées, difficulté de la traduction aussi bien que du marché. Seuls Tagore, Lokenath Bhattacharya (bengali), Subramania Bharati, Bharatidasan, Deva kumaran (tamul), Jay Shankar Prasad, Nagarjun, Vajpeyi (hindi) et K. Satchidanandan (malyalam) ont fait l'objet de traductions pour une œuvre complète, la poésie d'autres auteurs n'étant accessible que par fragments, dans diverses revues. »(2005a : 14)

A cet égard, j'aimerais féliciter l'initiative modeste prise par Purnima Ray, traductrice indienne qui a traduit la poésie bhatnagarienne pour le public francophone. L'effort est louable, malgré quelques fautes de langue. J'espère que les traductions seront remaniées et corrigées dans les éditions successives.

La poésie de Mahendra Bhatnagar touche plusieurs aspects de la vie humaine et il serait erroné de la mettre dans une moule fixe. Selon Nilanjan Chakrabarti : « Toutes les

expériences de la vie nourrissent la poésie de Bhatnagar .C'est pourquoi il a pu déchiffrer le sens de la vie dans toutes les nuances. » Pour Nilanjan, Bhatnagar est à la fois un « poète engagé » et « un poète de l'optimisme » qui soutient l'idéologie humaniste et progressiste sans se restreindre à un dogme ou un précepte. Ses regards sont tournés vers l'avenir. Il rêve d'améliorer la condition de l'humanité sans se réfugier dans les regrets éternels. D'après Sushant Mishra ,lire les poèmes de Mahendra Bhatnagar est « une expérience rafraîchissante » . Le poète ayant témoigné de plusieurs courants littéraires et mouvements nationaux, lui paraît tantôt comme « poète romantique » , tantôt comme « citoyen du monde absurde » . Pour Asha Pande , la poésie de Bhatnagar est parfois « optimiste » parfois « pessimiste ». Ce qui la touche le plus c'est le thème de la fatalité. D'après elle, le poète se livre complètement au destin en disant : « la malédiction que vous m'avez infligée –je l'accepte. » Selon Prema Hallikari, le thème de la mort est le plus frappant dans la poésie bhatnagarienne. Elle se rappelle les poèmes français comme « Demain dès l'aube » de Victor Hugo et « La mort du loup » de Vigny qui traitent également du thème de la mort. Pour elle, la philosophie bhatnagarienne de la mort, s'inspirant des *Vedas* et des *Upanishads*, se manifeste surtout dans les poèmes comme : « La vie et la mort », « La philosophie de la mort », « La gratitude », « A la fée de la mort »... En fait, la poésie de Bhatnagar n'est ni pessimiste ni optimiste, elle est plutôt objective et pragmatique.

Personnellement, je suis touchée par la foi inébranlable du poète en l'homme. Il réussit à exprimer ses sentiments dans un style simple et direct avec une touche d'optimisme.

Par exemple :

« *Have faith*

*Life
will be victorious
fear not the wicked ,
fear not !
Let's destroy
every doubt.
Have faith
life will be victorious”*

– (“*Ek Din*”–“*One day*”) (2004: 249)

–(Ayez de la foi, la vie sera victorieuse, N'ayez pas peur des méchants , N'ayez pas peur ! Détruisons tout doute, Ayez de la foi, la vie sera victorieuse.)

A plusieurs reprises, le poète énonce la même confiance en l'homme .Il souligne l'objectif ultime de la vie d'un être humain :

« *We
who are the artisans of life
should talk only
about life
discover
the meaningfulness of life
and know
about the essence of life!”*

(“*Udeshya*”- “*Purpose*”)

(2004 : P 251)

–(Nous qui sommes les artisans de vie, devons parler seulement de la vie. Découvrons le sens de la vie et sachons de l'essence de la vie !).

Je suis également touchée par sa compassion pour les êtres subjugués et marginalisés de la société contemporaine. Dans l'un de ses poèmes « *Woman Reborn* » il plaide ouvertement pour les droits de la femme subjuguée :

“*You are not a commodity of a man
Nor are you the soulless slave girl”*

(« *Nai Naari* » – « *Woman Reborn* »)(2004 : 83)

-(Tu n'es pas un produit de consommation pour l'homme
Tu n'es pas non plus une esclave sans âme)

Le poète manifeste, à plusieurs reprises, sa haine
farouche pour les politiciens et dirigeants corrompus :

"These 'destiny makers' of new India

In 'Ambassadors'

Blowing dust

Spitting on the oppressed

Trampling on humanity

Loiter carefree"

(*" Hamare Ird gird"- "Our Ambience"*)

(2004 : 59)

-(Ces 'fabricants du destin' de l'Inde nouvelle , roulant en
'Ambassadors,' soufflant de la poussière , crachant sur les
opprimés, écrasant l'humanité, flânent sans souci)

Si, d'une part, Bhatnagar plaide pour les marginaux
de la société contemporaine et lance des critiques acerbes
contre les gardiens hypocrites de la société, d'autre part, il
montre un intérêt vif pour les questions de la mort et de la
naissance .Pour lui, la mort et la naissance sont intimement
liés. Les deux sont les faces de la même réalité.

A titre d'exemple :

« *Death : un unbreakable string tied to birth* »

-(La mort : Un cordon incassable, attaché à la naissance)

(« *Jeevan Mreetyu* »- « *Life-Death* ») (2004:241) .

Plus loin le poète dira :

"Neither there is any hell

Nor there is any heaven

This manifest world is the only truth

Death –a truth

Life –a truth"

(*"Vastav"- "Reality":(2004: 247)*

-(Il n'y a ni enfer ni paradis; ce monde matériel est la seule
vérité . La mort : Une vérité; La vie : Une vérité).

Les quelques exemples cités ci-dessus révèlent
quelques traits divergents de la poésie de Bhatnagar, qui tout
en restant simple et directe en forme, est profonde en essence.
Finalement, j'espère que le présent volume éveillera l'intérêt
d'un public francophone et anglophone pour la poésie hindi
moderne.

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Mahendra Bhatnagar : **Un poète moderne de l'Inde**

Quand on m'a mis le recueil de poèmes du Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar à la main, en parcourant ses poèmes, c'était notamment le thème de la mort qui m'a frappé le plus. Donc, dans cet article je propose de faire un petit compte-rendu de certains poèmes de ce poète indien qui écrit en hindi. Je vais le comparer avec les poètes français, comme par exemple, Victor Hugo, Paul Eluard et Alfred de Vigny qui appartiennent tous au dix neuvième siècle.

Tout d'abord, je me demande si ce thème de la mort est partagé de la même manière parmi tous ces poètes mentionnés ci-haut ? Autrement dit, existe-t-il des éléments communs entre les poèmes de Bhatnagar et les poèmes français. Bien entendu du fait que la notion de la mort reste universelle chez l'humanité, la source d'inspiration chez chaque poète se diffère. Chez Hugo, c'est la mort de sa fille Léopoldine qui reste une source évocatrice (cf. 'Demain dès l'aube'); chez Eluard, c'est plutôt le résultat de la Guerre Mondiale - la misère, la souffrance et la mort qui en sont la source inspiratrice.(cf. 'Finir') Par contre, chez Vigny, c'est en effet le stoïcisme, autrement dit, le comportement stoïque des animaux face à la mort (cf. 'La Mort du Loup'). Selon Mahendra Bhatnagar, c'est plutôt ses observations et ses expériences de vie en particulier et la vie en général, qui l'inspirent ..Il est indéniable que ce poète reste lourdement influencé par les 'Vedas' et 'Upanishads' qui font la partie intégrale de la culture hindoue. La philosophie bhatnagarienne de la mort se manifeste dans ses poèmes intitulés « La vie et

la mort », « La philosophie de la mort », « La gratitude », « La gratitude : encore », « Le désir lascif pour la vie », « La vérité », « A la fée de la mort », « La façon de mort », « L'Épithète », « Le dessein », « Egale », « La réalité », etc.

Le Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar est un poète de nos jours dont les œuvres restent fort bien impressionnantes. Le poète est bien établi dans la littérature hindi et reste influencé par la philosophie hindoue, mais en même temps, il maintient son identité et sa subjectivité-le.

La poésie bhatnagarienne ne reste ni pessimiste ni optimiste, par contre, elle reste assez objective et pragmatique en ce qui concerne ses opinions, ses idées et les messages qu'il qu'il veut transmettre aux lecteurs. En outre, on pourrait dire que ce poète attache beaucoup d'importance à la vie et trouve la source d'inspiration en 'mort' :

*La flûte de la mort continue à jouer,
Les jardins de mangues qui étaient une fois
joyeux et radieux
sont silencieux et désertiques maintenant,
Mais, avec la foi mystérieuse
L'homme continue à rire
Au milieu de larmes et soupirs! ...*

('Le désir lascif pour la vie', in : A Modern Indian Poet, Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar ; Un Poète Indien et Moderne, Trad. Purnima Ray, Indian Publishers' Distributors, Kamla Nagar, Delhi - 110 007, 2004. P. 124)

Le poète nous montre qu'on reste debout sur le dos de la mort :

*La mort est :
La mort est imminente,
Inévitable –
C'est pourquoi
La vie est si désirable!*

('La Gratitude', Ibid., p.234.)

Et il ajoute plus loin,
La vision ou la sensibilité de mort,
La tension pour la mort minute par minute
Sont acceptables,

La Gratitude
A la mort
Est la gratitude de vie!

(Loc. cit.)

Car la contribution de la mort à la vie est immense :

La mort a fait la vie
très belle,
A transformer ce monde
en réalité,
Envers un ciel aimable,
Nous apprenons
La signification d'amour,
c'est seulement alors
que la vérité est véritable, ...

('La Gratitude', *ibid.*, p. 236.)

Et la plus grande réussite de 'mort', c'est :

A transformer l'homme
En les êtres
Plus hauts que le dieu immortel! ...

(Loc. cit.)

Le poète démontre également que la philosophie de l'être humain et l'idée du Dieu sont centrées sur 'La Mort' :

S'il n'y avait pas de mort,
Le Dieu n'aurait pas d'existence,
l'homme
n'aurait jamais rendu compatible
avec sa destinée!...

('La Vérité', *ibid.*, p. 238)

Puisque l'homme a toujours cru que 'La Mort' est

imminente, son idée du Dieu n'est que :

Le Dieu est un symbole,
Le Dieu est venu preuve
d'impuissance de l'homme,
d'empressement après la mort ... (Loc. cit.)

Le poète essaye d'établir un lien entre 'La vie' et 'La mort:

Le mort :
c'est un cordon incassable
Qui est attaché à la naissance ...
(La Vie et la Mort', *ibid.* P. 242.)

et assez stoïquement, il pose la question :

La naissance :
Pourquoi y a-t-il une jubilation?

La mort :
Pourquoi y a-t-il de la peine?
Quand la naissance et la mort
sont la même? ...

(Loc. cit.)

Le poète nous semble dire que comme on ne peut pas détacher la mort de vie, de la même manière, la vie ne pourrait pas être détachée de la mort :

L'aube est rouge
Le soir est rouge
L'aube et le soir sont une seule et même chose.
Il y a
La lamentation sur la naissance,
La lamentation sur la mort ;
La naissance et la mort sont une seule et même chose.

(Egal, *Ibid.*, P. 246.)

Et que 'la vie' et 'la mort' sont égales :

*La mort –
C' est la naissance
A plusieurs reprises
De la théorie de l' âme, ...*

(*La Réalité', Ibid., P. 248.*)

Mahendra Bhatnagar a tenté de décrire 'la mort' d' une manière romanesque :

*Vous irez –
sur le pointe des pieds,
Etonnant
Comme une fille habile*

*C' est bien
Il est accepté !
Mon bien-aimé,
Ce jeu à vous
Est bien venue ! ...*

(*A la Fée de la Mort', Ibid., P. 269.*)

Par ailleurs, on trouve que Victor Hugo aborde le thème de la mort assez subjectivement du fait qu'il est plongé dans la douleur à cause de la mort de sa fille, Léopoldine. (cf. Lagarde et Michard.) Selon Hugo :

*« Je suis, lorsque je pense, un poète, un esprit;
Mais sitôt que je souffre, hélas! je suis un homme »*

(cf. *Les Contemplations, IV, iii.*)

Selon Hugo, la mort est « *la douce endormie* », « *un épanouissement de l' âme ...* ».

(cf. *Les Contemplations.*)

Chez Eluard, 'la mort' se manifeste dans le contexte de la guerre mondiale et pour lui, la mort reste un fait honteux qui avale le courage et la fierté de l' homme .

"Honte à tous ces soldats qui, si longtemps, perdirent le goût de la liberté, honte à tous ces guerriers gardés par des

gendarmes. Et surtout, honte à ceux qui sont morts, car ils ne se rachèteront pas'. ' Ils ont ... renforcé le sens humain des sacrifices inutiles. A son avis, « Le respect des morts, c' est la peur de la mort, c' est ce respect de la lâcheté devant la mort'.

(cf. Lagarde et Michard.).

De même, Alfred de Vigny nous prévient d' accepter les souffrances et la mort 'sans jamais se plaindre', parce que,
*«Gémir, pleurer, prier est également lâche,
Fais énergiquement ta longue et lourde tache
Dans la voie le sort a voulu t' appeler,
Puis après, comme moi, souffre et meurs, sans parler»*

(cf. *La Mort du Loup.*)

{Le 'moi', ici, c' est le loup qui est mort stoïquement après être tué par les chasseurs. }

A la lumière de ce que nous avons disuté , on pourrait conclure que Mahendra Bhatnagar reste un poète assez unique et pragmatique quand il aborde le thème de la mort.

– **Dr. Prema Hallikeri**

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DR MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR : UN POÈTE INDIEN ET MODERNE

En 2004, le Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar a publié son recueil de poèmes intitulé, '*Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar un poète indien et moderne*' qui peut être considéré comme un grand effort dans la direction de la publication de la littérature contemporaine hindi en français. En tout, il y a cent huit poèmes dans le recueil, traduits en anglais et en français. Dans la table des matières, on trouve la référence des poèmes en hindi. Cela aidera ceux qui s'intéressent à lire la version originale en hindi.

Selon l' introduction fournie par la traductrice, Purnima Ray, le Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar est un poète aux talents multiples. Ses poèmes ont été traduits vers l' anglais par plusieurs traducteurs bien connus . Mahendra Bhatnagar, qui a vu plusieurs courants littéraires et nationaux, paraît parfois comme un poète romantique (voir les poèmes comme 'le destin-défi', 'le don de la foi vivante', 'le devoir' etc.), parfois un poète qui chante pour la paix, le courage et la vie (comme dans les poèmes 'vivre', 'avec le drapeaux', 'effondrera pas' etc.)

Mahendra Bhatnagar écrit aussi pour le peuple comme un marxiste (dans les poèmes comme 'Peuple', 'Notre ambience', etc.), mais il soutient également les pensées de Gandhi et de Nehru. Il véhicule les sentiments des Indiens vers la Chine, pendant la guerre de 1962 .Par exemple:

*"Comme un camarade
nous vous avons fait un bon accueil,*

*Comme le symbole d'une nouvelle résurrection de l'
Homme,
Pour ce retour?*

*Afin que vous —
Avec des buts impudents
Et des motifs d'expansionnisme sales
Nous commentiez une agression
Cruelle, barbare et soudaine.."*

Le poète attaque la Chine qui lui paraît trahir même les principes du communisme :

*"Afin que vous
dans l'apparence du communisme,
lanciez les yeux gloutons,
à toute l'Asie du sud et de l'est?"*

*L'histoire n'était pas de tels espoirs de vous,
Afin que vous y ajoutiez
Un chapitre si amer!*

Quelquesfois on constate mêmes des sentiments postmodernes chez le poète. Comme un citoyen du 'monde absurde' du XXème siècle, il regrette la perte du sens des 'mots' dans son poème: 'Il n'est jamais arrivé en avant' :

*"Il
n'est jamais arrivé en avant —
que les mots
d'expressions innombrables,
d'intentions différentes
sont devenus cavernieux,
ineffectifs,
des signes uniques!"*

En conclusion, lire les poèmes de Mahendra Bhatnagar est une expérience rafraîchissante. Ses poèmes nous représentent plusieurs phases et aspects de l'Inde du XXème siècle. J'estime que ce recueil peut nous aider à projeter nos

littératures dans le monde français. Mais avant d' être ambitieux, nous devons essayer d' améliorer quelques erreurs dans les traductions françaises . De plus, on aimerait bien voir "I" Introduction" par la traductrice ainsi que les "Annexes" en français (qui sont tous en anglais).

—**Dr Shushant Kumar Mishra**

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Dept. of French Studies, BHU, Varanasi, INDIA



Sur la poésie de Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar

Cet article se base sur la traduction française des poèmes du Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar , faite par Purnima Ray. Malgré l' adage classique qui dit que traduire c' est trahir, il semble que la traduction de Mme. Ray réussisse bien à transmettre au lecteur l' essence de l' original. Sans faire aucune critique de la traduction, on pourrait dire que le génie littéraire d' un écrivain s' exprime et se révèle malgré les défauts de la traduction. Car le lecteur cherche à reconstituer l' essence de l' original en surmontant les obstacles dressés par la langue-cible. La fragrance de la poésie de Mahendra Bhatnagar émane par-dessus de ces obstacles.

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar est un poète doué d' un très grand talent qui écrit essentiellement en hindi. Ses poèmes ont déjà été traduits en anglais et en plusieurs d' autres langues nationales et internationales. La richesse de la pensée s' est mariée avec la lucidité d' expression chez Mahendra Bhatnagar. Cette alliance équilibrée entre le contenu et la forme a fait de lui un poète «avant-grade» de la littérature indienne moderne. Bien qu' il ait un penchant naturel pour l' expression lyrique, il a manié avec autant de sûreté et de compétence, des modes d' expression narratives ou dramatiques. Sa voix poétique est marquée par une sincérité rare et par une authenticité difficile à trouver ailleurs.

Toutes les expériences de la vie nourrissent la poésie de Mahendra Bhatnagar. C' est pourquoi, il a pu déchiffrer le sens de la vie dans toutes ses nuances.

Mahendras Bhatnagar est un poète engagé car il a toujours

soutenu l' idéologie humaniste et progressiste à travers ses poèmes sans se restreindre au huis-clos d' un dogme ou d' un précept quelconque. C' est un poète de l' optimisme parce que ses regards sont toujours tournés vers l' avenir. Il rêve de l' amélioration de la condition existentielle de l' humanité. Donc il ne se réfugie pas dans les regrets débilissants dont souffrent la plupart des hommes croyant vivre dans une situation imparfaite.

– **Dr. Nilanjan Chakrabarti**
Senior Lecturer,
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, INDIA



A Modern Indian Poet : Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar

Le recueil de poèmes « Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar un poète indien et moderne » traduit par Mme Purnima Ray m' est parvenu à travers un ami il y a quelques mois. Malgré le fait que les poèmes soient traduits à deux reprises : d' abord du hindi en anglais et ensuite de l' anglais en français, il y reste une certaine fraîcheur. Le thème de la fatalité est traité dans le poème, « J' accepte ». Le poète se livre complètement au Destin en disant :

« *La malédiction que vous m' avez infligée – Je l' accepte. »*

Bien qu' un peu défaitiste, ces vers sont beaux dans leur simplicité. L' air gai du retour en arrière du poème « Devant la fin » est en contraste avec l' aspect défaitiste que l' on vient de témoigner.

« *Quand les mémoires s' éveillent —
Il paraît que chaque porte est décorée
De branches de feuilles de mangue
Autour de tout!
La vie déborde
Du nectar doux et enivrant,
La vie brille de couleurs fraîches et vives! »*

Mahendra Bhatnagar manie une vaste gamme de sujets avec beaucoup d' adresse. Sa poésie tantôt optimiste tantôt pessimiste reste, en fait, pragmatique. La traduction malgré quelques lacunes , donne en gros l' idée de ce que le poète voudrait communiquer. Un recours à la version hindi pourrait

peut-être éclaircir mieux certaines nuances. Le poète aussi bien que la traductrice sont à remercier pour mettre ce beau recueil à la portée des lecteurs francophones.

— **Dr. Asha Pande**

(Associate Professor,
Department of Modern European Languages,
University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.)



English and French translations of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poems.

(1)

I enjoyed reading Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poems in English and French translations. They deal with a wide range of themes, mostly philosophical in nature. His views on Truth, Destiny and Death are quite thought-provoking. This is indeed a remarkable collection which will leave a lasting impression on the minds of the readers owing to its originality, richness and variety. The verses gain all the more depth as they are deeply rooted in the Indian spiritual tradition.

I will however be failing in my duty if I don't point out that the French text is marred by innumerable typographical errors such as :

Un des voix importantes (cover blurb)

L'adoration de l'art s'agit d'allumer ... (page 2)

L'adoration de l' Art s'agit de remplacer ... (page 4)

Le ciel de dèirs de l'homme est pleins ... (page 6)

Chaque instant quand *mouvoient ...* (?) (page 14) etc.

And the list is endless.

Despite all these errors, I should appreciate the effort taken by the translator to bring out the mood of the poet in her translation.

I hope this book will be quite favourably received by all the lovers of good poetry.

Dr. R. KICHENAMOURTY

(Former Dean of the School of Humanities & Professor of French,
PONDICHERY UNIVERSITY, INDIA)

(2)

The present compilation has been undertaken by Mrs Purnima Ray, a poet, essayist and translator from Burdwan, India. She has picked up various poems of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar and translated them into French.

These poems of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar have been written at various periods. He is originally a Hindi poet whose work has been appreciated for its modernity and simplicity. His poems have philosophical undertones and there have been reviews of his poetry comparing them to that of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Rabindranath Tagore.

Nine volumes of his poetry have been published in English. They are :

(1) *Forty Poems Of Mahendra Bhatnagar*

(2) *After the Forty Poems*

(3) *Exuberance and other poems*

(4) *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry*

(5) *Death-Perception : Life-Perception*

(6) *Passion and Compassion*

(7) *Poems : For A Better World*

(8) *A Handful of Light*

(9) *Lyric-Lute*

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has been not only a poet but also an academician teaching at schools, colleges and University. He has also been a recognized research guide in different universities. Furthermore he has won several literary awards from Madhya Pradesh governments. He has besides been a poet also edited literary journals, 'Sandhya', and 'Pratikalpa' from Ujjain (M.P.)

It is no wonder that such a versatile personality has been selected by Mrs. Purnima Ray for her French translations.

The redeeming feature of the book is that it has both the English poems as well as the translations side by side.

The poem that is very moving is Poem 29 — 'Le Suicide'. The poem in English has so much depth as it remarks on the pitiable and depressed condition of the Indian masses and yet one wonders if the French translation can convey this Indian spirit as the situation is purely Indian.

SUICIDE

We ourselves
Are destroying us!
Strange
That we do not feel the pain!
Because
Our hearts and mind
Are drugged
By the primitive and savage insanity
Of religion.

We ourselves
Are throwing hand-grenades on ourselves!
In madness
Are laying mines of fire
In our own house
And are attacking our own people!

We ourselves
Have abandoned the shape of a man
And have put on animal hides,
We growl
And snatch away the lives
Of our own descendants!

•

Tr. Dr. Ravinandan Sinha

Prof. & Head : Dept. of English, St. Xavier's College, Ranchi, INDIA
& Editor 'The Quest' (International literary journal)

LE SUICIDE

Nous détruisons
nous - mêmes!
c'est étrange
que nous ne sentons pas de peine!
Parceque
nos coeurs et nos esprits
sont drogués
par l'insanité
primitive et sauvage
de la religion.

Nous nous
jetons des grenades à main sur nous - mêmes!
Dans la folie et la fureur
nous étendons des mines de feu
dans notre propre maison
et nous attaquons nos propres peuples!

Nous, nous - mêmes
avons abandoné la forme humaine
et avons porté des peaux des animaux ,

nous grognons
et emportons vivement
la vie de nos propres descendants!

•
Poems titled 'Les Eclairissements' (Enlightenment), 'Solitaire' (Solitary), 'Alumez les Lampes' (Light the Lamps), 'Qui Etes Vous' (Who Are You) and 'Notre Ambiance' (Our Ambiance) reflect the quiet satire of the Indian situations and also the

adoption of spiritual awakening that the poet aspires for. Mrs. Purnima Ray spirit of translation is indeed a praise worthy one for she has painstakingly translated the works of this regional language to reach a world status.

All said and done the creative expression of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's has great depth and originality and one hopes that the reader is able to grasp these nuances in the French translations.

—DR. H. KALPANA

Dept. of English

PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY, INDIA



Appendix - 1

‘The Path’s Bend’ / ‘Samvart’¹

(Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's collection of poems in Hindi)

— *Rajeev Saxena*

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of those early progressive writers who imbibed the general awakening of the have-nots all over the world and were inspired by ideas about the inevitability of a change for better in its awake. He is thus a visionary, and carries a message of hope and victory of mankind against all odds, with dogged conviction.

He is, however aware that :

**A harvest of pain stands
in every heart
bearing no seeds of happiness!**

and

**It may be easy
to pass a day,
but difficult to live!**

He, therefore, poses questions :

**How can one breathe
when there is smoke of doubts
all around?**

× × ×

**Who has sown
thousands of seeds
of disbelief
in this land?**

and

Why this tear-teasing fog?

Yet he refuses to lose faith, because :

If one is capable

**of reading the face of age,
if one can feel harmony of his heartbeats
with that of the people,
there will be no question
of entertaining a dilemma,
no faith will then be without roots,
and no turn of four or seven roaded crossing
will be able to misguide us.**

In the poen entitled ‘*Commitment*’ he declares :

**We are committed
to bring in
a justice-based system and to change
this misery-stricken world.**

Almost twenty-five years ago he expressed his blazing optimism in the following words :

**Under the dense and dark clouds
the tiny lamp of man’s undying faith
Has flickered strong as ever!
Lost it has got somewhat
In the black blanket of darkness. You search it out,
and with it light your lamp.
Soon shall you see,
A myriad lamps lit up.**

And it is to his credit that he did not move an inch away from this optimistic position.

1 Poets Mahendra Bhatnagar And Dhumil’
‘NEW WAVE’ (April 22, 1973)

Appendix - 2

REFLECTIONS

MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR IS A WELL-ESTABLISHED HINDI POET. HE WRITES OF FREEDOM, STRUGGLE, VICTORY; OF OPPRESSED HUMANITY AND ITS VISION OF A NEW WORLD. HE WRITES OF THE BEAUTY OF NATURE, OF LOVE AND HATE, OF JOY AND SORROW. HE WRITES WITH ZEST AND A FEELING OF EXALTATION. MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR IS NOT A FORMALIST. HE CHOOSES TO FOLLOW TRADITIONAL POETIC RHYTHMS AND PATTERNS. HE IS TEMPERAMENTALLY A SONGSTER. THOUGH HE HAS OCCASIONALLY TRIED HIS HAND AT FREE VERSE, HE USUALLY FOLLOWS SMOOTH RHYTHMS. READING HIS POEMS I AM IMPRESSED BY THE FIRE AND FERVOUR OF HIS VERSE, HIS DEEP AND GENUINE SOCIAL AWARENESS, HIS LOVE OF NATURE AND OF LIFE. THIS IS POETRY EXPRESSING YOUTH AND EXUBERANCE, THOUGH WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF EFFUSIVENESS.

Prof. Prakash Chandra Gupta
(Dept. of English : Univrsity of Allahabad)
'The Literary Half-Yearly', Mysore

I PARTICULARLY APPRECIATE THE POET'S ARTISTIC PROJECTION OF IMAGES, HIS PICTURESQUE DEPICTION OF SCENES AND SIGHTS, HIS SUCCESSFUL PORTRAYAL OF THE DIFFERENT MOODS AND CREATION OF ATMOSPHERE, HIS SENSITIVE HANDLING OF THE LANGUAGE AND, ABOVE ALL, HIS COMPETENCE AND PRECISION IN PORTRAYING THE ABSTRACT. TO MENTION BUT A FEW POEMS 'REAP THE PADDY' REMINDS OF KEATS' 'AUTUMN', 'WIND' HAS THE FORCE OF SHELLEY'S 'WEST WIND' AND 'MOONLIGHT', 'TO THE MOON' AND 'THE BEAUTY OF THE SLEEPING MOON' ALL HAVE A WONDERFUL PICTORIAL QUALITY.

– Vishnu Swaroop
'Thought', New Delhi

Appendix - 3

Dr. B.C.Dwivedy :

'Living Through Challenges :

A Study of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry.'

[1]

Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of those established signatures of Hindi literature on whose shoulders one can put the burden of all promising and maturity of time. He is widely read, admired, analysed and scrutinized by the contemporary authors, critics and intelligentia. As the title suggests the book carries indepth analysis of the poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar mainly concerning the books (works) entitled — *Forty Poems (vol. 1), After The Forty Poems (vol. 2), Exuberance and other poems (vol. 3), Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry (vol. 4), Death-Perception : Life-Perception (vol. 5), Poems : For A Better World (vol. 6), and Passion and Compassion (vol. 7)*. Dr. B. C. Dwivedy who is also a rising column in the world of poetry and criticism, has written a fine monograph, dividing it in nine chapters, each replete with mature understanding, keen insight and graphic and interpretation of each and every aspect of Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry.

The first chapter '*Introduction*' comprises of the historical as well as introductory aspect of Bhatnagar's poetry which — "**... flourished in an era when the country was moving from chaos to discipline. It was a transition marked by an end of foreign rule and beginning of a new era. His entire poetry is marked with this change of time.**" (P.1) Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry like O.P. Bhatnagar's deals with the theme of time and its realities and comprehends a great variety of themes which directly focus on the largeness of his experience and the solemnity of his involvement in the affairs of life. His poetry is a mingling of both Wordsworthian theory of poetry that 'it is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquility' and Dr. Johnson's metaphysical theory that 'the emotion and intellect are yoked together in it by violence. B. C. Dwivedy conveys his own experience on reading the poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar, "**Before several months when I came in contact with his poems translated into English I expressed my desire**

to read his volumes and if so happens, to write several lines. I got all the seven volumes one after the other. Correspondence and phone-talks became more and more frequent. After reading his latest volume I felt an urge in me to ask "Is there anything more?" (p. 5)

In second chapter another theme of '*Human Predicament*' is well analysed. His poetry reaches every nook and corner of human life with his many faceted vision. Even being trembled in horrible situations the poet dreams of a smile on every man's lips. The another kind of human predicament which Bhatnagar has dealt with is a sort of conviction which the modern man has in him. The contradictions in human activities are well marked out in this chapter. The poet wants to root out the evils of selfishness, corruption, obsession and alienation of man and in this sense Bhatnagar's ideas are more human than spiritual. For him humanity is the only religion and the world is a family.

The next attempt is the '*Theme of Regeneration*' where love is the prominent factor of human life. He aims at the resurgence of life :

**"A new flame is blazing in every direction;
Life is lit up with red twilight.
× × × ×
Age old darkness has been dispelled
And on the path descends a new dawn!"** (P. 25)

The impression of Keats, Shelley, Walt Whitman and Bacan is marked impressively in his poetry. The chapter reflects his attempt to construct and reconstruct the world of hope, satisfaction and human character.

Forth chapter is an interesting one which deals with the fluctuation of Bhatnagar's faith and confidence in empowering the shattered human nature and society. Dr. Dwivedy has taken the instances from The *Mahabharata* and The *Upanishada*. He is found in the utter dilemma about the incidents of future and loses his consciousness, but even then he keeps his faith maintained in the goodness of things and sees man strong enough to face fearlessly the blows of misfortunes. Dr. B. C. Dwivedy says, "**Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is a journey from doubt to faith, from weakness to confidence. It cannot be said a journey from human to divine. There is a divinity with him all the time. His love is divine only, his faith is divine only, it is never earthly.**" (P. 45)

'*The Theme of Transcendence*' is not untouched at all in any of

his collection. By transcendence, he means to elevate human being and make him civilized. He feels the divine impulse in human mind, so his efforts to resurgence pass through various parts and predicaments of human life. His submission before the supreme soul echoes Shelley's call to the WestWinds for taking him away from the burdensome life :

"Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed." (P. 53)

This theme is a glaring trait of Bhatnagar's poetry which aptly makes him a universal poet. His spiritualism is equally balanced with his humanism.

The sixth chapter evaluate humanism in his poetry which is enwrapped in the garbage of modern trends. He has laid particular stress on humanistic principles which enable man to live dauntlessly even on the verge of decay and death. According to him hinderances are life long companion of man, they awake him rather than stopping him on progressive way. Dr. R. S. Sharma comments, "**Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar knows what it is to feel failure and disappointment, but his abiding strength is in courage and will to survive and overcome. The poet is aware of his broken dreams when the sweetness of a loving heart changed into poison.**" (P. 70) The instance from the *Mahabharata* is enlightening one that proves Bhatnagar's human concern justly.

His style is marked out as independent one. His diction, figurative language, spontainity of thoughts, ironic strokes and a touch of sadness prove him pure on the touchstone of poetic style, although much rests on translators who translated his thoughts expressed in Hindi into English in a remarkable way. Dr. B. C. Dwivedy has minutely observed and arranged the merits of his style.

Chapter eight throws light on the whole poetic output of Mahendra Bhatnagar. Summerizing the whole career and poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar B. C. Dwivedy has successfully presented the general estimate of Bhatnagar's poetry by several references of his remarkable poems that highlight the predominant message of his poetry. "**His poetry is not for poetry's sake, it is for the sake of society, education, humanism and rise of the common man to the level of super human. His career as a poet has a thorough development and the growth of his mind as a poet is quite natural and spontaneous.**" (P.93) B.C. Dwivedy gives a

graphic account of Bhatnagar's poetry whose **"immortal pen still beckons the future, goads modern man towards life's reality and whose nectar sweet words have an internal appeal for the modern youth."** (P. 101)

The last chapter *conclusion* mirrors the elements of motivation and eternity. Though being a realist and observer of gross realities of life, the poet remains vibrant, vivacious and full of sympathy with the human beings. Dr. Bhatnagar's concept of man and his expression of normal humanistic potential is well compared with R.W. Emerson by the author. The author consider love as the base on which existence stands, life progresses and death is overthrown. He himself says rightly, **"Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has spared his pen to generate in man the love — may it be love for self, love for soul, love for man, mankind or motherland, it makes man's living worthy and peaceful."** (P. 105) Therefore, the book is nicely produced and deserves wide readership, because it has got success in highlighting the chief traits of Bhatnagar's poetry.

— Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh

[2]

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar is one of the brightest stars in the contemporary Hindi poetry. He has been writing poems for the last six decades. His translated poems have been compiled in seven volumes namely *Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar (1968)*, *After the Forty Poems (1979)*, *Exuberance and other poems (2001)*, *Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry (2002)*, *Death-Perception : Life-Perception (2002)*, *Passion and Compassion (2005)*, *Poems : For A Better World (2006)*.

Dr. B.C.Dwivedy has included all these volumes to categorize and to analyse his poems into Human Predicament, Theme of Regeneration : Love & Life, Crisis of Faith and confidence vs Optimism, Theme of Transcendence, Humanism in New Age. This book has been divided into ix chapters.

Man is the most valuable property of poet Mahendra Bhatnagar. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry is just an exploration of human nature. Dr. Dwivedy has meticulously focussed this aspect in his chapter entitled 'Human Predicament.'

Dr. Bhatnagar has explored every nook and corner of human life. His ideas are more human than spiritual. He has identified in man an indomitable humanistic will that can regulate all his actions and overcome all the horrors in the human world.

Love is another eye-catching theme in Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry. The author has meticulously discussed this theme in his chapter entitled 'Theme of Regeneration : Love & Life.'

**Why a man
With love
and affection
Never looks at a man
Belonging to other religion.**

The author has showed Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry's journey from doubt to faith, from weakness to confidence in his chapter 'Crisis of Faith and Confidence vs Optimism.'

**Those exploited and oppressed
Have awakened
And have become the architect
of a new age!
The sky echoed by the slogans
of the feeling of equality
How much
The season has changed.**

In the next chapter of the book entitled 'Theme of Transcendence', the author has proved that transcendence is one of the most prominent themes in Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry. Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has inspired modern man to lift himself from the hell of life.

In the chapter 'Humanism In The New Age', the author has dissected the elements of humanism in Dr. Bhatnagar's poetry.

Besides being the categorisatic of the themes of pems, the author of the book has discussed the poetic style of Dr. Bhatnagar.

According to Dr. Dwivedy, **"Poet Mahendra Bhatnagar has developed his independent style. Being a Hindi poet he has access to the rich symbolism and imagery of Hindi poetry of the modern era. In most cases foregrounding has been taken as a means for expressing poetic emotion. His style is largely the result of his vision and experience."**

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetic progress has been discussed under the chapter 'Growth of Poet's Mind' (His poetry at a glance.) The author has concluded this book with this remark, **"I agree with all his critics to say that he is a progressive poet of modern times. Besides, he is a humanist, a reformist, a teacher and preacher of human creed with an unique and innovative**

style."

In the end I can say this book is a successful attempt to present the complete themes and personality of Dr. Bhatnagar.

— Dr. Ram Sharma

[3]

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry like O.P.Bhatnagar's deals with the themes of time and its gross realities. Quite a substantial number of poems that appeared in scores of magazines and periodicals have made the poet more and more recognized in the present scene. He is a realist poet with heart full of sympathy for the human beings. Dr. B. C. Dwivedy says, "**Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar has an ideal view on man which is natural and realistic. Man is a helpless serf in the hands of nature and his fate.**" (P. 103). Dr. Bhatnagar is a blend of mystic, romanticist, realist, humanist and lyricist. He has written songs that issue from his touch with the soul of existence — the inwardness of the thing, its essence, its beauty and truth which we experience when we have stepped into a sort of oneness with the thing. Like the other great poets he believes in the mystery of creation that is highly imaginative and look for the presence of God now in man and then in cosmos.

The present book under the review is a deep analysis of various themes of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry with sudden flashes on his life. The themes of human predicament, regeneration, crisis of faith and confidence, theme of transcendence, humanism are minutely handled by the stalwart critic Dr. B. C. Dwivedy along with his style and diction. He has found much similarity in the poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar with that of Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Plutarch, Walt Whitman, R. W. Emerson, Maslow and Francis Bacon. His attempt to establish him on the ground of Indian sensibility is equally praiseworthy where he takes several instances from the *Upanishada*, the *Purana* and the *Mahabharata* to prove Mahendra Bhatnagar's points and finally this proves that Indian sensibilities can operate to create some very appealing compositions in English aside of British contexts and models. His world of poetry oscillates between two extremes of words and silence, as if combining the dimensions of both epistemology and ontology in a sensible way.

He has been evaluated a great deal as a great humanist. He is a poet of man and his work is a poem of humanity. He has sympathy for the suffering man, for poor and the downtrodden, for the underdog and the exploited. His humanism is a part and parcel of socialism and humanistic mean without violence and serious inspiration of revolution. The West's lust for power and materialistic gain has certainly disappointed him. Through his poems, he has strived for the renewal of human personality and society. His deep love for man made him occasionally revolt against social injustice and political exploitation. This gets reflected in many of his poems. In numerous poems he cries for life, for light, for freedom, for strength and health and joy and open hearted courage amidst the misery and distress of common people. He says :

"Alone
I wandered
In the realm of dearth
In home,
In cities and in villages!
Here and there

I don't know when and where." (P. 73)

Dr. B. C. Dwivedy remarks, "**He is conscious that the task of humanism is to make man a true human and frame a society worthy of him. He dreams of a society in which man will be the measure of everything, there will be no unwise submission to the unknown and peace will pervade. Man will think of his excellence.**" (P. 75)

Sometimes the poet is also found swinging between the two poles of hope and despair and then consider life as an ill arranged drama of destiny :

"Destiny always takes us on the wrong path,
Leaving nothing for us to cling." (P. 36)

But ultimately the thought of Indian philosopher and poet Sri Aurobindo echoes in Mahendra Bhatnagar, then he searches for light in the dark. He is a progressive poet giving new definitions and new ideas about man's mental constitution. He is seen in between faith and infidelity and finally faith wins.

Like T.S. Eliot, Mahendra Bhatnagar's poetry echoes the theme of regeneration where like phoenix peace and prosperity came out of the debris of destruction :

"A New dawn, a new millenium,

**And the passions of a new life
For, never shall extinguish the lamp
of hopes and ambitions
of the toiling millions." (P.22)**

His emotions and thoughts expressed in Hindi are converted into English in much better devices of poetry ie. symbols, imagery, regular rhyme, musical effect, figurative language, lucidity, irony and satire. His poetry is a metaphoric leap into the matrix of existence. He is fully conscious of the potentialities of his poetic language and is eager to make most of the resources of it. He doesn't write from inspiration but from contemplative reflection. He regards poetry as a self conscious craft which emerges from prolonged contemplation and concentration on an idea, a theme or subject.

Thus this book may prove a landmark in the field of Indo-English literature which is competent enough to settle a Hindi poet on Indo-English land of poetry with proper commentary finding similarity with English poets to justify his case. The book is a testimony of his being "aprogressive, a humanist, a reformist, a teacher and a preacher of human creed with a unique and innovative style." (P. 107)

— Dr. Kalpana Rajput

DR. MAHENDRA BHATNAGAR

Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's is one of the significant post-independence voices in Hindi and Indian English Poetry, expressing the lyricism and pathos, aspirations and yearnings of the modern Indian intellect. Rooted deep into the Indian soil, his poems reflect not only the moods of a poet but of a complex age.

Born in Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) at maternal grandfather's residence on 26 June 1926; 6 a.m.

Primary education in Jhansi, Morar (Gwalior) and Sabalgarh (Morena); Matric (1941) from High School, Morar (Gwalior); Inter (1943) from Madhav College, Ujjain; B.A. (1945) from Victoria College, - at present, Maharani Laxmi Bai College - Gwalior; M. A. (1948) and Ph.D. (1957) in Hindi from Nagpur University; L.T. (1950 ; Madhya Bharat Govt.)

Places of work — Bundelkhand, Chambal region and Malwa.

High School Teacher from July 1945. Retired as Professor on 1 July 1984 (M.P. Govt. Educational service).

Selected once for the post of Professor of Hindi Language & Literature, in Tashkent University, U.S.S.R. (1978) by UGC & ICCR (NEW DELHI)
Principal Investigator (U.G.C. / Jiwaji University, Gwalior) from 1984 to 1987.
Professor in the IGNOU Teaching Centre of Jiwaji University, Gwalior in 1992.

Worked as Chairman \ Member of various committees in Indore University, Vikram University, Ujjain & Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Agra.

Worked as a member in the managing committees of 'Gwalior Shodh Sansthan', 'Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Academy' & 'Rashtra-Bhasha Prachar Samiti, Bhopal'.

From time to time, poems included in various Text-Books of curricula of Educational Boards & Universities of India.

Worked as one of the members in the Audition Committees of Drama / Light Music of All India Radio (Akashvani) - Stations Indore and Gwalior. Contracted Song-Writer of All India Radio \ For all Radio Stations (Light Music Section). Broadcast many poems, talks and other programmes from Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior and New Delhi (National Channels) Radio Stations.

Conducted and directed many literary societies in Ujjain, Dewas, Dhar, Mandsaur and Gwalior.

Appointed as one of the Award-Judges by 'Bihar Rashtra-Bhasha Parishad, Patna' (1981 & 1983), 'Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sansthan, Lucknow' (1983), 'Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi, Udaipur' (1991, 1993, 1994) & 'Hindi Sahitya Parishad, Ahmedabad, Gujrat (2001).

Poems translated, published and broadcast in many foreign and Indian languages.

Eleven volumes of poems in English :

- [1] 'Forty Poems of Mahendra Bhatnagar' [Selected Poems — 1]
- [2] 'After The Forty Poems' [Selected Poems — 2]
- [3] 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry.' [Selected Poems — 3]
- [4] 'Exuberance and other poems.
- [5] 'Death Perception : Life Perception'
- [6] 'Passion and Compassion'
- [7] 'Poems : For A Better World'
- [8] 'Lyric-Lute'
- [9] 'A Handful Of Light'
- [10] 'New Enlightened World'
- [11] 'Dawn to Dusk'

Distinguished Anthologies : Bilingual : Eng.-Hindi

- [1] POEMS : FOR HUMAN DIGNITY
[Poems of social harmony & humanism : realistic & visionary aspects.]
- [2] LIFE : AS IT IS
[Poems of faith & optimism : delight & pain. Philosophy of life.]
- [3] O, MOON, MY SWEET-HEARET!
[Love poems]
- [4] SPARROW and other poems
[Nature Poems]
- [5] DEATH AND LIFE

[Poems on Death-perception : Life-perception & Critical Study]

IN ENGLISH

- [1] ENGRAVED ON THE CANVAS OF TIME
(Vol. - 1 & 2)
[Poems of social harmony & humanism : realistic & visionary aspects.]
- [2] STRUGGLING FOR LIFE
[Poems of faith & optimism : delight & pain. Philosophy of life.]
- [3] LOVE POEMS
- [4] NATURE POEMS
- [5] DEATH AND LIFE
*

One volume of translated poems in French ('A Modern Indian Poet : Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : Un Poète Indien Et Moderne').
*

Works published in seven volumes in Hindi - three of Poems (comprising sixteen earlier collections), two of Critical articles, one on *Premchand* (Research work) and one of Miscellaneous writings.

Only poetry works published in three volumes in Hindi — 'Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar Ki Kavita-Gangaa'. (18 Collections)
*

Published research & critical studies :

- (1) Living Through Challenges : A Study of Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry.
[by Dr. B.C. Dwivedy]
- (2) Poet Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar : His Mind And Art.
[Edited]
- (3) Concerns and Creation.
[Edited]
- (4) E-Book : Dr. Mahendra Bhatnagar's Poetry in the eyes of critics.
[KedarNath Sharma]
- (5) The Poetry of Mahendra Bhatnagar : Realistic & Visionary Aspects.
[Edited / forthcoming]

Received awards, four times (1952, 1958, 1960, 1985.) from Madhya Bharat & Madhya Pradesh Govts.

Edited Hindi literary magazines 'Sandhya' (Monthly) and Pratikalpa' (Quarterly) from Ujjain.

Member Advisory Board : Indian Journal of POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES [Half-yearly / Thodupuzha-Kerala]

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