

**COLOSSAL RANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND PHILOSOPHICAL VISION
OF VIHANG A. NAIK IN POETRY
MANIFESTO (NEW AND SELECTED POEMS)**

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Vihang A. Naik's Poetry Manifesto unfurls the roll of a tinted fabric of his candid sensibility which displays the multicoloured impression of a huge range of his experiences. At one hand we find the shade of technical cognition, and on the other, various hues of his awareness about his social milieu, Indian philosophy of 'Moksha' and 'Moha', pangs of 'Summer Hill Devdars', natural cataclysm, 'Failure' of the contemporary man, an adult's futile or meaningless search, and stages of 'human longing, shuffling and destinations'.

The Book is divided in eleven segments entitled as: Poems, Are You Looking for that Poet ?, The Poet as a Young Man, Making a Poem, A Poem Comes Alive, Poet, Love Song of A Journey Man, Mirrored Men, Self Portrait, At the Shore and City Times respectively. Otherwise, the book may be divided in three sections. In first section there are 28 new poems, in second section there are 25 poems from his second published book entitled *Making a Poem* (2004), and in third section there are nineteen pieces from his very first Collection entitled *City Times and Other Poems* (1993). As per the blurb; 'The poems in this collection are vintage, Vihang A. Naik's poems are intuitive, thoughtful, philosophical and creative pieces.' Jitendra Aroliavery rightly remarks that: 'The poetry collection is based on many themes like religious, social, cultural, and political and economic and personal history. The first half of the book is devoted to concepts such as versification, poetic language, and tradition, the second half is organized along genre lines and examines, nature poetry, sociological experience. All poetry appears in the creative followed by literal translations. This book is considered to give readers with even smallest information of the English language and appreciation of the brightness of Indian poetry. Many poems in the collection are written in free verse. It will be a precious collection of poem for students and teachers alike.'

Striking imagery, captivating metaphors and subtle use of other figures of speech add a fresh glory and grace to his poems. In 'Indian Summer' he weaves following image to portray the picture of scorching heat:

Look out!
Through the iron grills
On the tongue of a dragon
is the boiling sun,

while, looked up, you dream
of rain and thunder.

In 'The Bunyan City' he personifies the city and defines it as 'aged city',/ facing the withered glory,/ now wrinkled, cracked,/ weather – beaten/ with dim eyes'. His poem 'Failure' ironically portrays the exact condition of contemporary man, when he writes: 'What a piss/of work is man/stuffed with NONSENSES/you have EYES/CANNOT see/ you can TOUCH/ CANNOT feel/your VICTORY/ is PAPERBALL/in DUSTBIN.' Sense of nothingness clearly echoes in his poem 'Night'.

It is night
The candle flame burns
melting a body.
After the flickers
and melting wax, a dark
void remains.

Life is a hollow word for him and he finds it equal to an absurd play. Same feelings are expressed in The Final Act.

After having played your parts,
after saying all that you wanted
to say. After all those roles
and the years that you've lived
through the uncertain age, suffered
and felt the pain to perform in an
absurd play.

He prays to the God to rescue him and show him some purpose or meaning in this absurd City, Poetry Manifesto is undoubtedly a remarkable poem in the entire collection. Very appropriately, he describes a poem as 'an unexpected thing; perhaps silly'.

The why, the How
and the what of poetry.
May it be black and white or bloody.
Or let there be VIBGYOR

Paper poems.

His poems exhibit a clear influence of William Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, T.S. Eliot, Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, and Kamla Das. In his attempt to Indianize the entire book he introduces words like 'moha', 'maya', 'mukti', 'moksha', or brings the characters like 'draupadi', 'vishwamitra', 'menaka', makes references to 'Mahabharata', 'Ramayana', and uses words like 'odhni', 'ghazal'. In 'The Song of Menaka' he admits that 'there is a point where words /fail; language ends when body/takes over talking.' Juxtaposition of visual and tactile senses seems striking in following lines ;

Fingertips have eyes,exploring,
Eyes become fingertips,unseen.
Body is *moha*, desired.*Maya*, admired
Even Vishwamitrawouldn't deny the view.

He aspires to achieve the state of moksha 'through the flesh of', 'glazing body'. 'At seventeen' is another poem where he defines different aspirations and practices at different stages of 'age' in an entirely different way.

At seventeen you write a poem –
You've lost your
su'arg. Discover the *n'arg*
Within yourself .At thirty
You practice
moksha making a poem.

To him 'life is a philosophy/book with pencil marks/wounds and comments.A poem /you cancelled at the end'. The pain of broken heart of a sensitive poet makes the reader shudder from pain too.

My heart served in a clean plate.
I never know that the life of a poet
Could be cut into two with fork and spoon.
After our affair she discovered life
is a tale of prose .I felt love as short as haiku.
A time to part.Let us kiss and depart.

The shortest poem in this collection 'I' can be kept in the category of diamond poems.

I
Wake up
To see my
Self

'A Character' is an experimental poem that opens with a confusion that 'I am. I am not', reaches at a question 'am I', ends with a nihilistic vision but still with confusion: 'I am not /am I not'. The city reverberates through entire book in 'Indian Summer' he searches the city ,lost/in a mirage', in the next poem 'The Banyan city' it converts into an 'aged city', where there is 'humming of vehicles. The city mumbles'. In 'Ahmedabad', he wants to 'become a hermit' after a withdrawal 'from the madness /of a city'. He defines cities as small places as 'compared to galaxies'. In 'Prayer' cities are defined as absurd:

this
absurd city
city within

a city
cities leading
you nowhere

‘Making of a poet’, gives words to his desire to ‘walk down the streets/of a city as a stranger/ a desire to be alone amid the crowd’.The races ‘melt away /in the noises /of a city’.Men change but ‘a city changes /sooner than mortals’.The heart of a city has changed since the ‘city is gone whoring with twisted minds and uncertain ways’(116).Invitation of a city cannot go unnoticed:

you dart a vision
to view a city
hanged
composed of unreal’

‘Midnight City’, the last poem of this book again portrays the picture of ‘moon bleached city’. He closes the poem with following lines:

the cry
of stones and streets
the dry skeleton
of a city
in
the grave
of slumber.

Poetry Manifesto is indubitably a gem in the treasure box of contemporary Indian English poetry. Since the experimental strain, philosophical expressions and emotional intensity displayed by Vihang A. Naik is exceptional. Reading of this collection instils the sense of satisfaction and wondrous pleasure in the hearts of the readers. Sudhir K. Arora very aptly writes: ‘from the technical aspects, the poet in Vihang Naik seems to be rich enough to create interest in the reader who enjoys the music as well as ponders over the thought expression. His short lines attract with images and phrases that speak themselves to the reader.’ All the poems of this collection are specimen of his unparalleled poetic adroitness.

Works cited:

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