

CHAMBIAL AND HIS WORLD OF POETRY

P C K PREM

palampur, himachal

D C. Chambial (1950) is one of the most influential voices in Indian English Poetry. He is genuine, imaginative and authoritative. He appeared in 1983 with a collection of poems – *Broken Images*. He has till now published nine collections of poetry including – *Broken Images*, *The Cargoes of the Bleeding Hearts & Other Poems* (1984), *Perceptions* (1986), *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* (1996), *Before the Petals Unfold* (2002) and *This Promising Age & Other Poems* (2004). His latest collection of verses, *Hour of Antipathy* 2014 signals a potent return of a poet of images and philosophic thoughts after a gap of two years, and offers moments of stimulating pleasure and fulfillment. The lyrics bubble with a subtle surge and warmth and the pithiness and nimbleness in flow of images with rainbow like haziness and beauty amidst silent grey clouds stun and mystify.

He also edits “Poetcrit” a literary magazine of International repute. Despite odds, the literary journal (devoted to poetry and criticism) of immense significance to the students, academicians, critics and scholars of Indian English Poetry, continues the journey and enters its Thirtieth Year of publication in January 1917. Poetry lovers continue to give it love and approval and that is the strength of the journal –a great individual literary adventure, rarely seen elsewhere. It is worthwhile to underscore the contribution of this major poet at this moment.

An intellectual probing is one of the most outstanding features of Chambial’s poetry. He looks into the life’s dilemmas in contemporary scenario. He is disturbed since the multifaceted personality interferes too often, and therefore, a coherent and rational view is possible only when one goes into the psyche and intellect of the poet. It is imperceptible but it stirs. He authentically speaks of modern anguish, pains arising out of the chaotic living conditions, scrambled thought processes while a man fails to locate a correct existential position amidst surging despair and overshadowing frustrations. Therefore, Chambial’s intellectual intensity befuddles a gentle heart.

When asked to elucidate the poetic art and the essence of poetry, Chambial said in gentle words, “A good Poem” has different connotations for different people. For some, a good poem means ‘a poem’ that tells something in familiar words with rhythm and rhyme. For me, ‘a good poem’ is one that uses imagery with economy of expression and compels one to think and refracts its meaning(s) like light reflected from a diamond.” He says again, “Poetry, for me, is what stirs one’s mind and sets it into action/contemplation about the object/idea that has given a sudden jolt to the otherwise ordinary mind on an ordinary moment of time.... poems have come up from the deeps of my heart. ...some idea, word, or thought strikes mind, it sets into action in association with heart, and poems are born spontaneously. There have been moments when I tried to write without any emotional leaven, the result has been futile. On the contrary, when supported by emotional back up, I have composed even 3-4 poems within very short span of time. The image/picture appears on the canvas of mind, hand moves on paper and the result is a poem or poems.”

A little later, he opined that symbols play a definite role, “However, readers and critics both have so far missed the element of symbolism in my poetry. The very first poem, ‘Stones’,

Broken images is symbolic. A host of my poems is written with inherent symbolic import. I wish this area is also explored.”

To understand the poet, it is necessary to know the intellect of the people. Post-independence period witnessed many changes in the system in totality, and the minds and hearts of the people throbbled with the possibilities of charting out a bright future. Without colonial hangover, he depicts life as it is with its pure Indianness.

An intensity of experience overwhelms and one gets unique expression in wonderful images.

Life –an urge to go
to deeper recesses
but annulling force
of buoyancy doesn't relax
until volcano erupts.

(“Volcano,” *Broken Images* in *Collected Poems* 9)

Realities of life shock, and an apathetic attitude brings carnage and violence. ‘Stones, apartheid, spades and sickles’ are words loaded with terrific images, which create fears in the minds of peace loving people. Falcons, skeletal sky, colliding thoughts, blank canvas and myriad’ work as images in “In a Trance” that shock and bewilder, signaling callousness and brutality. A merger of emotions and thoughts, cries for meanings amidst struggles, ending like the collapse of “a rootless tree / in the storm.” Intellectual wailings make existence disturbing, and modern life seems rootless, and lacks synchronization. He is distressed at the nature’s anguish as hills tremble, sky weeps, and the shadows of smoke appear like a sea of desolation. The poet’s hints of frequent bloodthirsty wars, communal riots, bomb blasts and fanatic religious battles in various parts of the world are timely and warn men of the ominous extinction. Identity is an enigma, defying reason and scrutiny.

Highly philosophical lines below astonish with brevity and candor. A disillusioned bard exhibits tremendous faith and gushing optimism.

Life is music
attuned by
maestro divine.
Pleasant to those
who pick
and dance with the song.
Jargon to those
who fail to find rapport
On the steps of melody and heart.

(“Life,” *Broken Images* in *Collected Poems* 15)

He lives in the poetic aura and radiance and rarely opens up. Sufferings in contemporary life disturb. *The Cargoes of Bleeding Hearts and Other Poems* appeared in 1984, heralding meaningful return to the theme of disillusionment. Hopeful cynicism and illusive world drives him away to abstruse imaginings.

The sun's gone
 the moon wails
 meteors play funny tricks.
 Tomorrow will be a cloudy
 morning. Wolves are out
 To devour earth and sky.

("Cargoes of Bleeding Hearts," *The Cargoes of Bleeding Hearts & Other Poems* in *Collected Poems* 25)

One witnesses a wonderful scene as images startle with unbelievable intensity.

I sink my feet in the cold water
 on a bed of sand and stones
 dreamed about past when
 bacteria struggled in snow....
 A boat dances on waves
 river sobs, clouds bleed
 Hills turn blue.

("Bleeding Clouds," *The Cargoes of Bleeding Hearts & Other Poems* in *Collected Poems* 27-28)

Incessant struggle in the mind continues, and the mad engagement as shadows of life run with emptiness and an escape from the 'bee-spider' run-about never terminates.

Poet's forte is to create images, paintings and pictures of life and nature and even out of nothing he crafts startling similes. Objects that usually escape man's attention attract poet's vigilant eyes. The world of nature is an inexhaustible cache from where he draws out pearls of wisdom and weaves dreams as rational interpretations emerge. Objects dead or alive, plants, animals, birds, water, earth, stars, sky and ocean are instruments to carry emotions, thoughts and philosophy. Pictograms as symbols of man's internal strife are significant while he demonstrates and camouflages quality of life. Hypocrisy, violence, mendacity and fears repulse a man in him to the inner world. A man feels discontented despite varied comforting gadgets but the devices enhance intensity of agony.

Mental and physical sufferings pile-up as meaningless wars fought around the world burden inborn sensitivity, and a vulnerable man seeks life and existence in incessant violence. "A Cry for Peace" carries the load silently, and "Masks" exposes deception and vanity while a man makes strenuous efforts to find causes and reasons of a not very happy destiny.

One after another
 mile-stones are left behind
 With a hope
 of reaching some destination

("To My Friends," *The Cargoes of Bleeding Hearts & Other Poems* in *Collected Poems* 28)

One happily notices a ray of hope, a stream of flowing life and a wish to fill the world with "satyam, shivam, sundram." A melancholic shadow overtakes while one reads gentle lines of

“To Mother”. A child’s psychology finds expression with the eternal question, ‘Who I am?’ “A Prayer” makes a startling departure where the will to live encourages to discern the true meaning of beauty, truth and god in life. Soon, he settles down contentedly as the words form images impregnated with meaningful reflections.

The poor pigeons
 stare at the horizon
 in the hope of a new sun
 will it dawn?

(“The Burning Tree,” *The Cargoes of Bleeding Hearts & Other Poems* 43)

Philosophic tensions almost disappear as the years roll on. *Perceptions* (1986) makes a radical shift in mind and heart. He is relaxed, and meditates in cheery countenance. For him, life is an opportunity to create and disseminate joy around. In “The Ripe Time,” the theme is forceful with an eye for the future. Concentration and single-minded devotion leads man to achieve target. The poetry is not merely an emotional outburst but has a definite purpose to serve.

I have a few acres of land
 with the coming of rains,
 Thundering of clouds
 I get ready to sow the seeds....
 I have belle blithe and debonair;
 she sings, snorts, laughs
 Weeps and fumbles.
 Is it time? Is it time to sow the seeds?...
 I think it is time to sow the seeds.

(“The Ripe Time,” *Collected Poems* 47)

If he hints at the famous *sloka* of *Gita*, he appears focused. A desire if inspires action for the reward is futile. *Karma*, if selfless, makes life meaningful. The poet is worried about humanity. His symbols and images obscure clarity at times, but the poet refuses to work on a predetermined pattern to arrive at a transparent objective and so here, he allows feelings to wield the marker spontaneously. If “To her Luscious Lake,” is a sizzling and sensuous love verse with a sprinkling of fresh thoughts, love for humanity worries in “Let Us March” where he is blunt and philosophic. Humanity and humanism do not recognize any religion, dogma or doctrine but repose faith in man and life.

Let us march, today, hand in hand
 concatenating souls like beads
 into the thread of the greatest ROSARY
 the ever cherished HUMANISM. ...
 ...march into that land and time
 where colour and creed do not impede;
 impede not the free flow of fellow feeling...

(“Let Us March,” *Collected Poems* 48-49)

In a subtle intellectual touch, “Summer to South” (*Collected Poems* 100) establishes sovereignty of god. The poet reveals amazing sense of discrimination here.

Poet’s meditative and emotional, analytical and philosophical faculties do not appear lethargic. As years roll on, he crystallizes and straightens a few ambiguities. Earlier love for the images and metaphors made it difficult to go deep into the mind. However, uplifting, mild filtering and sieving, marvelous precision and transparency emerge in later years. He treats contemporary realities with empathetic feelings as symbols and similes flow with a refreshing liquidity in *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* (1996). In an age of insecurity and stark faithlessness, the questions of survival reign supreme and so the mind that “one hand severs the other” and the feelings of “love and compassion” mean nothing. “Sinking Crossroads” piercingly talks of vacuity and chill in fragile relations. Elsewhere “Flaming Candle” in fine images, speaks clearly about the transient nature of life. Life lingers on and finally, goes deep down the abyss of oblivion.

Drop by drop I melt
like a flaming candle
into the unfathomed deeps.

(“Flaming Candle” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* in *Collected Poems* 81)

Darkness and suffering may dampen spirits but shadowy region has a definite end. “Night can’t be Long” celebrates optimistic view of life.

Night can’t be long
Dawn peeps from the eastern hill
Swan peace to knock the sill.

(“Night can’t be Long,” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* in *Collected Poems* 82)

Materialistic living is not only a theme but also a philosophy of modern life. Once, he told that he has a soft heart, “for the suffering humanity. Whenever I encounter any suffering person, the spectacle hurts me as this you must have observed while going through my poems. I empathize with them and try to delineate their suffering with a view that our leaders and other who matter in this respect may have a similar feel for them and think about transforming their lot.”

A demon of corruption is a god today. It shocks when one learns “for they also love who rape and kill.”

Ultra-modern mentors
set examples to toll the knell
At the altar of Mammon
care a fig for men and morals;
Indebted to these caring captains’
Brain-babies: hawalas & scams.

(“Confessions,” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* in *Collected Poems* 84)

In “Without the Qualms of Conscience,” poet talks of cunningness, violence and loot of a modern man bereft of morals where horse-trading is a trait of politics. A graphic picture provokes to think agonizingly.

We feel safe
with whisky in pegs
legs in plates and become
Blind to everything else
even our nudity.

(“Without the Qualms of Conscience,” Gyration *Hawks and Sinking Roads* in *Collected Poems* 110)

Rhythm is the casualty and if a man aspires otherwise, it is “Longing in Void” and he observes only “Vultures in Sky” without hope of tranquility. In a heartless world, a sensitive thinker is a “Casualty” and “I feel cut asunder / from the world / like a shuttle lost in space” (“The Casualty” 85). If a man sticks to morals and virtues, he is a non-entity.

Like metaphysical poets, he draws images from nature in a startling rapidity. Nature is eternal and nothing can hurt it, is the message of “Singing Blossoms” (125). Blossoms symbolize beauty, harmony and meaning.

Sing about the innocent
Tears shed in gang rapes, bomb-blasts
Sing about the epileptic morals
in moments of white fancy.
Again:
He’s left for from where
none ever returns
to tell about the voyage

Words succinctly sum up life’s predicament and complexities. Everybody pursues meaning but comes out empty-handed “in the search of the face / lost in void in / the valley of *maya*” (In the Memory of a Dead Friend 127). The poet’s pangs and pains arising out of modern life are evident in *Before the Petals Unfold* (2002). Many lyrics embarrass and disturb but themes of the fragmented, vicious and unethical life provoke.

In Hopkins’ poetry, one finds immensity of love for nature and genuine imparting of significance. Hopkin’s images are distinctive having an integral quality. For Chambial, the natural objects carry deep meaning, and each segment of nature gives material for the intense images with multi-dimensional implications. In “Life-An Enigma,” the poet equates life with a map on a palm and visualizes life’s movements.

...crawling fingers crave
to feel the peaks of moon
in this frost with a hope to flow
from stasis to flux
from coldness to heat.

(“Life and Death,” *Before the Petals Unfold* in *Collected Poems* 115)

Symbols of ‘heat’ and ‘icy chill,’ stir poet again when he thinks ‘of the mangled relations.’ Thoughtless pursuits keep a man occupied and so, he turns insensitive. Angst and uncertainties continue to depress. Harsh realities resurface in another lyric “Life”. Life is “an endless tale of / vales, dales and hills / from the black holes of eternity, and individual is: mere cog / in the wheel of time / no will.” He is conscious of the fears assuming different shapes challenging the intellect. Philosophic attitude lessens agonies. If one looks into the embryonic meaning of “Yesterday is not today,” it is evident that a man not for a moment feels cut off from the past. Life of a man is inexplicable for faintly known reasons and thus, remains embedded in the past.

Every new moment
 springs from the womb
 of the moment gone by
 Fertilized in mind
 bears young one of its kind.

(“Yesterday is not Today,” Before *the Petals Unfold* in *Collected Poems* 130)

If intentions are obvious and pure, “The Nudging Present” gives a new tilt to the meaning. The past and the present become inseparable, and stealthily tell of the past, and predict future. He seems fine-tuned to the sensations nature stimulates. “A Sluggish January Evening” is mildly cozy and proves a motivating experience, “sun slowly sinks down / shadows rise to the sky / A toddler tittle-tattles at the whining dog / Labourers look at watches / at their cozy hearths” (“A Sluggish January Evening,” Before *the Petals Unfold* in *Collected Poems* 138). Fire tragedies that occurred a decade ago at Dabwali, Baripada and Mina in Mecca, disturb. He laments at the vast human tragedy exhibiting apathy of man.

He dwells on the contemporary predicament, failure and glory in *This Promising Age and Other Poems* (2004). If it is at the pinnacle of brilliance, it has also touched the nadir of disgrace. Man’s life and philosophy move between two pendulums and in-between he builds a world of truth and facts, fancies and dreams. A heart feels, the eyes observe and the intellect analytically interprets life and society. “This Promising Age” is a realistic poem in fragmented rhythms. Like the age itself, the words disregard a pattern. However, the narration is obvious and the images terrify stridently. A life of inner contradictions and outer variations haunt and frighten a serious man. Life is mechanical and just looks as if a man designed it years back. An ‘antagonistic society’ is ‘acute’ with heartless ‘attitude’. Misfortune “in this robot culture / where soul defies / the principle of metempsychosis / and enter into / wires, screws, transistors.../ to help, interpret and amuse?” appears glorified, apparent and deadly in “This Promising Age” and the frequency of chilling series seems ghastly. Finer sensibilities feel the vacuum, sterility and aridness.

Compassion, pity, sympathy
 face retreat
 in the face of hypocrisy and cynicism...
 Nature has been cruel
 to the honest individual...
 Ordinary time flows into
 Bhrgu time.
 Unknowingly know centuries

yet feel not so

(“This Promising Age,” *This Promising Age and Other Poems* 6-7)

An age structures and reshapes man’s life and activities. A man moves around, below the surface and above into the deep sky and feels, and yet he is unfeeling and so, a man’s intellectual anguish survives. When nature is enraged, it destroys and spells peril. Wreckages and remnants are its indelible marks on the earth and here, a man learns to reconstruct life. A little verse “With a Whimper” makes the situation grave and witty. Morning rituals of brushing teeth and shaving assume a ludicrous character. He looks at transient life with a philosophical eye and through images created out of the objects of nature, interprets it. In “Sand-Smell Spreads,” a unique fragrance emanates, as if from the vast desert of Rajasthan. His control over the images is fantastic while he pays tributes to the women in Rajasthan for the sturdiness and vigor, and the verse prompts invigorating thoughts.

Sink into, emerge from the vast wilderness

Ploughing the sands

Mirage metamorphoses into reality.

Pagodas of water

Poised on steady heads;

The fiery sun feels defeated.

(“Sand-Smell Spreads,” *This Promising Age and Other Poems* 24)

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He is quite conscious of the sufferings a man undergoes. The structure of society now is not conducive to a peaceful life. If at the intellectual level, he makes efforts to interpret life, he is also not ignorant of the worldly problems. He is not only worried about the predicament of contemporary life but the challenges it poses to existence, give tensions. Contemporary man is despondent. Out of the mundane and materialistic life, he wishes to extract spiritual element. When he talks of eternal soul, an intense struggle begins to reorient location of life differently, for the issue of redefining the infinite and the eternal crop up. The ‘Self’ of a man, a product of social milieu and the ‘anti-self’ pitted against the ‘self’ in an inner battle raises questions. The poet wishes to retrieve the spirit, the eternal force. His growth of poetic thought and sensibility in contemporary consciousness is marvelous and reveals disordered conditions of life and living. Modern poets often hint at the possibility of ultimate establishment of peace and order out of the anarchic situations and to that extent, quite hesitatingly remind of Milton and many epics of the world including India (if a scholar wishes to go back). An appalling struggle at the mental and physical level in *Mahabharata* if talks of violence it also advocates peace.

One imagines an imperceptible picture but it creates stir in the veins when a man through work and involvement in mundane functions contributes to the joys of humanity. A man is an integral part of humanity and its contentment. In the process, he minimizes the impact of sufferings. A sublime flow of emotions and feelings saturated with love and affection infuses freshness and vitality. He raises issues of present-day distress, of pains arising out of the frenzied living conditions, of surging despondency and unbearable frustrations confronting man. In the existing conditions, the lyrics excite a man to think seriously about the situation.

He adheres to a fixed pattern, imbibes subtle changes without a nod and again it disturbs an explicit definition. The poetry opens up new vistas and horizons of lyrical brilliance and he unhesitatingly registers an awe-inspiring presence. Lyrics thrill and appease and at times, rouse

and exasperate. He is a master of short lyrics and one must peep deep into the meaning of images if one wishes to enjoy his poetry. He is a meticulous poet, who experiments and touches every subject. The masters of short lyrics or haiku are easy to understand, it may appear or perhaps it is amusing to read the little poems, for these do not take much time and at this moment, he excites and provokes. Imbued with a genuine historical and cultural perspective, Chambial's poetry loves to create civilizing aura with stunning images. He has an innovative style and wields linguistic mastery, and as such, gives persuasive treatment to the subjects.

Chambial is a poet of free India with a rich stream of Indianness. One notices unique characteristics in thought content as it takes the reader fervently away from the colonial burden. When one looks into the poet's thematic content, one finds depths of rare understanding in surveying the mindset of Indians. He considers urban life just mechanical and unemotional. A man moves like a robot and responds to the life's complexities in a set pattern of predetermined norms ingrained like a capsule. He interprets life in terms of little nails, screws and wires and here, it ends with plenty of 'hypocrisy and cynicism'.

...Estranged soul entangles itself
in the criss-cross of vibrations.
Entirely new features prop up the land
nourished by
synthetic cultures and ideals.
Plethora demoniac
descends down on the earth
like a beam
to impregnate
the abortive eye;
compassion, pity, sympathy
face retreat
in the face of hypocrisy and cynicism.
(“This Promising Age,” *This Promising Age & Other Poem in Collected Poems 153-154*)

An insipid and dreary life moves like a machine in towns, nourishing a synthetic culture, and offers plenty of insinuations where for a few moments of breathing space, a man discovers chunks of joys and delight in a radically lackluster life. Startlingly, he takes life as it comes but warns a man when he clarifies or confuses through allusions.

He talks of “The Merciful”, who gave birth. It was, may be, to escape from the ‘sadness and loneliness’ and meditate deeply in hours of ‘melancholy’ that He, the Merciful, resolved ‘to carry out the exploit’ to its logical end.

From His melancholy, He gained respite
Took His tools...
Life budded forth from Eternal Joy.
How can a father be displeased with his ploy?
(“The Merciful,” *Before the Petals Unfold 19*)

He talks of a woman, who in grueling living conditions takes care of the child. To her, a child appears an image of god. Like a nurse, who is worried about the patient, she saves the child

from hunger. One needs to understand ‘patient’ and ‘baby’ correctly in a wider context. He talks of the patients and the babies and through them, he travels to humanity and subtly to the land of the gods, for he is keen to live in eternal peace and alternately, envisions life on earth.

She serves unto Him
 and unto Humanity.
 Now and then
 the baby cries hunger;
 wipes her sweat from her face
 and sits down on a stone
 to suckle her child – manna
 kisses on the forehead
 to frighten the fatigue away.

(“The Lapidate,” *Perceptions* 74)

He is disciplined in the use of words and scrupulous in depicting ugliness of politics. If he recalls the sacred names of secular outlook, pragmatic politics, love, peace and harmony, it is because he wishes modern politicians to learn lessons from history and heritage.

...They preached their philosophies
 To make a heaven of this earth.
 To redeem man of his misery,
 To blaze the torch to show the path....
 Now the perfidious politicians
 See it their sacred duty to suck
 Like vampires every drop of its blood.

(“The Lost Man,” *Gyrating Hawks & Sinking Roads* 49)

He appears sad and depressed at the degeneration in politics and condemns the selfish approach of netas in a democratic setup. He talks of new ‘lords’, who follow ‘ultra philosophy’ and are lost in corrupt practices without caring for the means of which Mahatma Gandhi was a great proponent. When he speaks about the means and the “fruit,” he hints at the great leaders in nascent years of Indian democratic socialism. He reminds, “Once this land of the *Gita* / was hailed as the holiest land, / people around the world revered it” now, in the hands of deceitful and wily politicians, has turned ugly since the crafty men in power loot and bury ethical happiness, and celebrate material growth and opulence. He talks of politics in historical perspective and is candidly worried about the fall in moral values.

He speaks of the ethics scathingly and feels distraught. He appears disturbed at the deterioration of the principles where the system collapses as violence and arson spread. He is agitated and compares men with “Vultures and crows” when a painful revelation haunts and men forget the quintessence of life for which the “The Merciful” created and sent men to the world.

Vultures and crows
 Simulate swans:
 Peck at carcass
 At the cross....

Now touches the nadir
Of human values, never
In human history
Stooped so low;
Supine.

(“Vultures and Crows,” *Before the Petals Unfold* 53)

If oblique references to the religious books or places surface, he makes the purpose quite pertinent and wishes to commune with a sensitive heart and mind. It ultimately ennoble the ‘inner self’. He is no doubt, worried about the destiny of man and talks of the principles and ethics. Despite noticing crevices in morality, he exhibits an optimistic consistency. He holds firm convictions with a little variation, which persuade a man to interpret life in various shades. In a significant verse faintly reminiscent of Eliot’s “Prufrock,” he talks of life here and beyond.

Let us, you and I,
saunter beyond
the murky lanes and by-lanes ...
In winter.
Man builds bridges
to solemnize
the marriage.
Here and the Great Beyond
the two hills
separated by eighty-four lakh *yonis*.

(“A Wish,” *Gyrating Hawks & Sinking Roads in Collected Poems* 107)

He speaks of life’s miseries, obstacles, and then, the thoughts of harmonizing irritations of living crop up. He goes beyond and talks of *Hindu’s* belief in eighty-four births and deaths, before a created being takes birth. It may be difficult to see life in such an incomprehensive theory based on belief only, but definitely, for any man of faith, it constitutes a solid assurance. The lyric speaks of a dichotomy where a man learns to live in sufferings and hardships whereas in another verse “Life,” he talks of rhythm and harmony.

Life is music
attuned by
maestro divine.
Pleasant to those
who pick
and dance with the song
Jargon to those
who fail to find rapport
on the steps of melody and heart.

(“Life,” *Broken Images in Collected Poems* 15)

Shiv K. Kumar’s words are worth quoting, when he says -

...he does not limit his vision to mere descriptions of nature, but also charges his verse with a refreshing moral fervour. He is anguished by the corruption that has seeped into our lives. However, he does not articulate this disillusionment through abstraction but only through images, metaphors and similes which are truly striking. (“Foreword”, *The Promising Age & Other Poems* 3)

He ventilates true anxiety on the issues highlighted but at the same time, he is conscious of obligations to the society. Not for a moment, he ignores man – the subject matter of philosophy. A solidity of faith in Indian consciousness is the hallmark of poetic strength. He reveals a truly illustrious clarity, genuineness and simplicity of poetic art. Uniquely different in attitude to women, he elicits genuine praise. Ethics and value-system guide poetic journey. The poet has an innate aptitude to stun with sparkling images and so, he celebrates the view that the victory of man is the ultimate reality of existence. Time has not come to say a final word about the poet’s rhythmical art but he will not relent and continue to enrich poetic realm with innovative technique, craft and energy of thoughts.

It is interesting to delve deep into the genuine anxieties he exhibits while he tries to find a definite location of man in the society. Man’s sufferings and miseries arising out of the present rot and sickness not only bring disheartening moments but also affect social consciousness. Sufferings, mostly find origin in poverty, exploitation, hunger, violence and general deprivation. The poor and the downtrodden live in absolute misery and continue working hard so that earning livelihood is easy but still he anticipates no hope and brightness.

One hand severs the other
tears of joy turn
into tears of sorrow
with a single burst of bullets
and compel to think
about man’s sagacity
about Chandarsekhar limit to this ball
into black holes.

(“Sinking Crossroads,” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* 6)

The existence of violence does not allow man to live in peace. A specter of brutality haunts peace and makes it difficult to live meaningfully while it drains away goodness and virtues. Love and empathy no longer enrich life but the prevailing disordered conditions crush graceful sentiments. Therefore, he visualizes miseries and sufferings for the hardworking men, who live in deprivation and poverty whilst the ghost of exploitation continues to chase.

Stark realities shock whereas an insensitive and apathetic attitude of man brings bloodshed and violence, and hard-edged men do not mind killing others. The words like stones, apartheid, spades and sickles create fear in the mind of peace loving people. Images words create, speak of a world in which we live and still hope to survive. For the working people, he nurses softness, and in more than a dozen poems, he freely expresses gentle feelings. Social issues affect life he describes aptly, and if one goes to the roots of the subject one finds malaise in the political setup. He makes out a case that the widespread deplorable conditions of the poor and the *dalits* are, in reality, the result of a corrupt system.

Corruption in politics is just a staple and favourite diet of social plazas polluting routine activities of men like the toiling farmers in the fields and the choking laborers in the factory. The workers with masked faces working with shovels in deserts and the men digging earth and carrying stones are burning subjects of political discourse. A solution to the ailment is –

This land needs select surgeons
to operate upon the sore
Leave the body crane-white...
Night can't be long
Dawn peeps from the eastern hill
Swan peace to knock the sill.

(Night can't be Long," *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* 9)

If one understands the meaning of words like surgeons, sore, crane white and swan, one can make out that the words speak of hopes, toiling men nurture. 'Jains' is an oblique reference to the prevailing corruption disturbing the lives of the poor and the honest men. Not only he is sensitive to the destiny of underprivileged segments of the society, his social anxieties awaken a man to hard truth.

He is a poet of images and the field of poetic sojourn is philosophic. Even if he talks of the sufferings of humanity, he is detached and calm. However, in "The Lost Man," tone is sharp and satirical and in a few words, he surveys the plight of the poor man –a mere victim in the hands of the mighty, who preach ideals and ethics. "The Man is Lost" is a shrill cry with equally loud protestations of a wounded heart. A tale of vulnerable spectator it is where a genuine man in 'man' not only suffocates but waits for an eventual death as he reels under the gruesome weight of ghosts of corruption, unparallel scams, scandals and reprehensible display of unethical values governing and guiding the society and the country. Ultimately, the masses, the poor and poverty stricken, the hungry and the thirsty, the houseless and the landless living under constant threat to frail survival suffer one infers. The threat to life originates from the rich and powerful, a contemptuous observation.

The teachings of *Rama*, *Krishna* and *Buddha* surface. Universality, secular outlook and catholicity of great souls brought peace and harmony on earth one believes. Non-violence and truth govern the land and the people while fighting against the socio-political evils, work 'to make a heaven of this earth' and 'redeem man of his misery'. However, he talks of 'new kind of lords now treads this land' –

They also teach an ultra-philosophy
Of corruption, scams and hawalas
They mind not action but fruit:
no fruit is forbidden for them
No action for them low or base.

("The Lost Man," *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* 49)

A mordantly penetrating and horrific poetic unfolding of the contemporary social fabric, distresses. The rich and the resourceful, the teachers and the intellectuals and the arbiters in politics play a spurious goodwill sport. The powerful people make the society corrupt and reduce the poor to susceptibly wretched plight whereas a democratic setup envisioning a land of

peace and prosperity refuses to materialize yet. The elected class of people in India has flourished with corrupt practices and has eaten up the vitals of economic growth. The poor live a wretched life in absolute drudgery and exploitation.

An appalling attitude of politicians is the root cause of unrelenting anguish and the bug of vampirism needs complete eradication. A morosely regrettable and disgusting situation arises as people in authority mint money, grab land, kill morals, butcher the value-system and culture and still speak nauseatingly against perpetual evils. A living in contradiction is the fountainhead of evils making lives of the poor miserable. In spite of the growth and progress, the poor do not get enough food but face exploitation, famine and drought and ‘sob in cells sullen.’ ‘To live and murder, to loot and ravage money and morals, ethics, virtues silently...’ is an entertaining source to the mighty men.

Lit the fire at the altar to goddess Dowry
With flesh-n-blood of newly wedded wives
Man is lost! Devils thrive like wasps on hives.

(“The Lost Man,” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* 49)

A sarcastic commentary on the social life it is where greed determines the fate of women. Indians live life where it becomes a huge problem to lead a pure life despite a colossal assemblage of saints and *sadhus* mostly enjoying the patronage of the rulers. Corruption not only erodes the social body, it also eats up vitality of values, a revelation that it pushes morals and ethics into the abysmal depths of oblivion without redemption. Indians are now ‘the true heirs of Satan’, he feels. ‘Fall of Indian’ – not Man, begins with the ‘disobedience’ of Gita, *Rama*, *Krishna* and *Buddha*.

We are the denizens
of such an age which breeds
corruption like flies...
the vice and corruption
to guillotine, feed
them instead
The virtue crouches in a corner
for sheer fear of
Being butchered
the foxes rule the roost. Beauty, truth and
Goodness face the law.
Ugliness, falsehood
wicked enjoy treat.

(“The Tempest,” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* 15)

Flies, foxes, law, cradle and tempest are pregnant with meanings and function as the symbols of terrific vices. Corruption and sleaze ail Indians. A modern man does not want men and admirers of beauty, truth and integrity because ethics and probity suffer, and ironically, a man eulogizes evil. The rulers are vicious and like foxes in the masks of men encourage people to live a life of grace, honesty, morality and ethics. Sins recoil and the land faces desolation where vices flourish, “the sun has set, the light is gone / We follow the fate of / Sodom and

Gomorah.” Near home, one thinks of Sri Lanka, a country of yore that faced a near end. In a remorseful vein, the poet observes-

Care a fig for men and morals;
Indebted to these caring captains
For their brain-babies: Hawalas & scams.

(“Confessions,” *Gyrating Hawks and Sinking Roads* 12)

“Confessions,” though not very original yet reveals naked hypocrisy. Absolute selfishness and egoism guide a man whether in childhood or youth. Materialistic living is the theme of modern life. The demons of corruption are the new gods today. It shocks when he repulsively avers ‘for they also love who rape and kill’. A degenerated man is the reason of grave anxiety. “Death on Road” is a pathetic picture of a man, who dies in an accident whereas “Without the Qualms of Conscience” is about cunningness, violence and loot of a modern man. Horse-trading is a trait in politics, for political living is a life of arson, rapes, violence and sexual orgies.

We feel safe
with whisky in pegs
legs in plates and become
Blind to everything else
even our nudity.

(*Collected Poems* 86)

Spleen and vermin of the corrupt and unethical life continue to haunt. He talks of India perhaps and the men of the world. He touches everything and tries to understand. Nothing appears meaningless. “The Tempest,” “Rubble of Thick Night,” and “Birth of a Schizophrenic” with images of modern life, distress and confound and the hardhearted attitude benumbs.

Another picture emerges as he obliquely points out at the mental and physical sufferings and meaningless wars fought around the world. Today, a man seeks life and existence in incessant violence, and the living fear of death is a disturbing thought. “A Cry for Peace” carries the burden silently and the “Masks” exposes deception and arrogance. Even the mythical characters enhance the impact of modern sufferings and ordeals.

A baby on the pebbles
and a passer-by
hear the continuous sound
Of the hammer on the stones;
the sun at vernal height.

(“The Lapidice,” *Collected Poems* 53)

He is sensitive to the sufferings and perspiring life of the toiling poor men. “The Lapidice” reminds of a great Hindi poet, *Nirala*. A dismal and hard life of a woman on the roadside breaking stones while looking after and feeding her baby, is a memorable scene. In work, a man worships god. Physical sufferings and harsh realities occupy the mind of man, who is aggrieved at the perennial hardships he undergoes.

Life –
an endless tale of
vales, dales and hills
from the black holes
of eternity
a dance set up to tune
of Master Divine.
Man reels and reels
Until the musician decides
To terminate.

(“Life,” *Before the Petals Unfold* 30)

Man cannot resist natural temptation to link physical sufferings of a modern man to something that he lacks within and here, a man of force invisible and yet powerful wields deep and perpetual influence on man. While in “The Storm,” he harps on sufferings, a deluge, “On the Bank of *Sarayu*” and “Awaiting Moments,” inspire him to get back to meaning and truth.

On the bank, I stand
and ruminates
by the dhooni of a yogi.
Rising smoke whispers in my ear
Not to bother brains –
to stitch the parts lost in yugas.

(*Collected Poems* 63)

Sufferings, rejections, disenchantments and failures impart meaning if understood in right perspective and the disconsolate man loves and enjoys with expectation of an abrupt foray into mild but strong feelings that strengthen a quality life. One feels quite down the dumps on reading certain poems but immense patience proves rewarding. The poet is not oblivious of the disquieting trends in the contemporary social system where sufferings and moments of anguish prove stressful for the man. If man disturbs nature and hurts humankind, nemesis is inevitable because man gets the reward, good or bad for *karmas* on earth. A man is conscious of the genuine contemporary anxieties exercising deep influence on the psyche of the man ultimately leading to upsetting social spectrum, which requires instant reprisal or else man faces perdition.

“The Gujarat Quake” recalls the accomplishment of man’s actions knowingly or otherwise that create widening gaps in what he says and what he does in reality. Nature is secular and gives equal treatment to every being on earth.

like the pack of cards
burying the young and the old
the fair and the ugly
the rich and the poor
a lesson in secularism
to men who cry hoarse
about their fake faith

enshrined in their selfish hearts!

(“The Gujarat Quake,” *Before the Petals Unfold* 74)

The poet’s agony at the dreadful heartrending incidents that took place in Yugoslavia and India (“Upon the Snowy Heights” – Kargil) is quite evident. He is shocked and stunned at the inhuman acts in the so-called civilized world. A spirit of patriotism thrills at the valiant fight Indian soldiers put up, and finally defeated the enemy. One remembers movingly the patriotic spirit and the sacrifices of the brave Indian soldiers.

Upon the craggy pikes of snowy height
You fought so well and showed the world your might:

(*Collected Poems* 132)

The poet paints a horrifying word picture in “Death by Fire” (12) and “Yugoslavia” (41). One prominent feature of the three lyrics is quite perceptible. A man is responsible for his actions, which he does outside the usual areas of a logical reach with iniquitous objectives. Sufferings visit a man with vengeance, the moment he violates physical and conceptualized borders of earthly realities. The poetry of Chambial, if it is mostly philosophic, it also depicts awful realities. Contemporary sufferings at the physical level are consequences of the widespread hunger, and thirst for more. A deliberate endeavour to appropriate rights of others at the material level is quite apparent. It appears manifested in the verses, and consequently, people live life in miseries and deprivation and therefore at times, they decide to retaliate.

A sensitive poet frequently speaks of the bloodthirsty wars, communal riots, and bomb blasts and fanatic religious battles continuing in some parts of the world, which to him appear as well-timed warning of an imminent annihilation. The poet’s dread is alive as he lives under restrictions. Materialistic thoughts put obstacles in the way of freedom. An unknown entry of words and ideas surprises a man, and he thinks glory and magnificence adorns him but it does not happen. Living life in a multipart mirage confuses and possibly the poet wants man to live in harmony, only then, he will live happily. He is conscious of the modern social worries ailing the society. He feels disturbed, thinks and then, writes vividly of sufferings and hardships. He is not a Marxist but definitely, he reserves warm sympathies for the poor workers and farmers. He hints at the value-system that could ameliorate deplorable conditions of the poor, if man is honest.

Social anxieties and anguish cause genuine distress in a true man. Chambial is not different - his idiom, nuances, similes, metaphors and myths demonstrate total Indianness. When one goes through the poetry of Chambial, one finds that he does not talk of vacuum and boredom but speaks eloquently of social evils, corruption and obsession for money. He speaks of the fall in quality of life and degeneration in ethics while making it transparent that ignoring Indian culture and ethos are mainly responsible for such distortions. Chambial often escorts man to the impenetrable and cryptic land of frequent changes in sequences, mindscapes and heretofore, many strange inner areas of vibrations create stirring images. He fills the physical and psychic world and one is scarcely aware of the internal developing growth.

A sensitive heart feels and contemplates deeply when one goes deep into the poetry of Chambial. His poetry is difficult to understand as abrupt shifts in images amaze but if one observes patience, verses reveal inherent beauty and meaning. It happens often and if one understands an unintentional technique of his poetry, one would enjoy verses. The poet’s search for perfect images to interpret life is still unfinished and so to understand him, one must try to

know the effervescent dynamism and horizons of creative activity because energy with creative urge is essential to recognize Chambial's poetic perspective. External reality appears chaotic, disturbing and unsystematically arcane and he tries to elucidate with images but cannot justify adequately. An inner struggle continues and in intensity of creative upsurge, he feels free and sincerely gives expression to experiences with the help of images again. One observes consistent efforts where the poet tries to find a fusion between the subjective and objective and as a formalist, wishes to go beyond the normal range and import of words and images, he uses and at this stage, he beautifies the text and the art of poetry.

He is deeply worried about the contemporary sufferings, injustice and sense of discrimination prevailing in the society. Like Shiv K Kumar, K N Daruwala, I K Sharma, O P Bhatnagar and I H Rizvi, he understands the ambiguities and complexities of miseries around, and possibly it is agonizing for the poet but still hope for a better future sustains. An adroit use of simple words with subtle hints at a possible salvation out of the labyrinth of sufferings makes him a poet of hope and optimism, and he demonstrates the expertise adequately. To 'a man' and living, where rhythm in life is just a dream, the optimist in poet amidst unmitigated intrusion of sufferings and pains, prays for a happy and hopeful future. He appears to simplify images he draws from nature and if he does, he decorates poetry with beauty and meaning and gives fresh dimensions.

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BIO

P C K Prem (p c katoch of garh-malkher, palampur, himachal, a former academician, civil servant and member psc hp, shimla) is an author of more than fifty books. A post-graduate (1970) in English literature from Punjab university, Chandigarh, he taught in various colleges before joining civil services. Associated with several social/literary organizations, he has also brought out nine volumes of poetry besides five books on criticism, six novels and two collections of short fiction. Creative writings in Hindi include twenty novels, nine books on short fiction and a collection of poems. Recipient of many literary awards including HP State Guleri & academy awards and *Bharat Hindi Rattan* award, he is a poet, novelist, short story writer and a critic in English from Himachal.