



Sagar Mal Gupta's *The Songs of India and the World: A Critical Tour of India*

Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh

Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English
Swami Shukdevanand College, Shahjahanpur, U.P.

Being Indian and writing about India is a typical task, though not to be considered as typical because natives know better about their own country. The eye of the writer becomes more critical than a document of appraisal. Sagar Mal Gupta is a poet beyond critics who thinks a lot about his own country and like Chaucer's England as depicted in *The Prologue*, his poetry gives ample shades of India, its people, its tradition, its politics, its culture and all black shades of India. He himself says, "The collection contains several vignettes of India. The first poem 'India's Identity' tries to describe the chaos, the disorder the unruliness of Indian roads. But the attraction of India lies in this malhomie. Despite this chaos, India marches ahead and reaches its destination successfully, effortlessly, and easily." (Gupta iii) He recollects several national and traditional gatherings of India where sometimes patriotism and at times spiritualism hover all around us as 'cultural (Deepawali, Holi), spiritual (Ramanavami), National (15th August and 26th January, regional (30th March being the Rajasthan Founding Day) and birth anniversaries of all gods and great men and market forces.' The very first poem begins with a sharp satire on India when an American comes to India being enchanted by its glory:

Instead of Columbus
An American came to India
To explore, to examine, to seek
The mysteries that lie within the country
That attract many foreigners to this spiritual land.
But he could not believe his eyes
What he saw at the crossroads in the cities." (Gupta 9)

He gives us a sheer visit to Bikaner in his poem 'Camel Festival of Bikaner' where he again seems to criticize the camel festival sharply, when he makes camel his mouthpiece and gives words to his outpourings through the mouthpiece of camel who does not wish to demonstrate himself, rather it shades tears and complains against the behaviors of men. Naguib Mahfouz is of the view, "Man, in his nature, and by virtue of the religious feelings which fills his being, always seeks to believe in that which will give him faith and deliverance." (Mahfouz 1) Another poem 'On Kite Festival', the poet numbers the harms of flying kites which harm small birds and kill them cruelly. The poem 'Deepawali' is yet another piece of criticism when he gives a squinting look to this great festival while describing its motto:

It is a festival of caring and sharing
It is a festival of mutual cooperation.
How do you celebrate this festival?
By sharing your possessions with others
Or only distributing your possessions
Between yourself ignoring
Those who are suffering from deprivation
It is for you to decide." (Gupta 16)

India's low strata is described at its best in the poem 'On Dine-Dashing', when a girl selects her life partner and informs her parents about selecting a handsome life partner who is 'a dine-dasher, a chain snatcher, a first-rate hacker, a loan defaulter, a most fashionable, and stylish Youngman of 25 years.' (Gupta 25) His poetry abounds in the examples of power hunger among Indian people and in the poem 'Insatiable Hunger', he finds no difference between low and high people when they think about power and pelf:

If father becomes minister
 Son cannot be far behind.
 A minister's wife, son, daughter
 All are participants in power.
 This unavoidable hunger makes
 The commoners, the rich and the politicians
 Equal fellow participants.(Gupta 26)

'Politicians Promises' is an excellent satire on politicians' promises during election. Politicians outsmart each other in attracting people by making false promises to get their vote. Some announce ten percent reservation for economically weaker class, while others promise to give minimum income plan and some are so high that they promise to make the temple of Lord Rama. On the other hand, common person is so God-fearing that he never deviates from his words. Sagar points out the black marks on the body of Indian civilization and he doesn't know whom to blame for all these stigmas while man can easily thank God for good deeds been done by Him for men. This is the significant difference between man-made world and God made world.

His attitude for women is that of a respect where he does not see them as mere bodies but he wishes people to see them as greater than the body, greater than the land and she is an 'ocean of emotions' in which millions are satiated. His 'Proshithbharya' is a beautiful poem about women who live far from their husbands due to financial reasons and their return to their home brings immense joys in the families:

After a long and impatient wait
 The rain God at last relented
 And poured his hidden love
 Over his darling wife and children
 Who with that heavenly touch
 Got rejuvenated and ecstatic
 And welcome him with open arms. (Gupta 43)

Sagar is very minute in detailing the simple things like in the poem 'On Independence Day' he questions about the life of women when all are making a fuss that they have become independent. Are women independent when they are tied with the chains for family responsibilities from the very inception of their lives. They are still in bondage after years of independence and we are 'hearing stories of rapes/ bride burning and violence to women'. 'The body was viewed as a common rack upon which different societies could inflict different norms of behaviour or personality'.(Loon 140)He pictures the life of the people of Mutuvan people of Kerala, where power, electricity, machines, transports all are missing, but people are still living a heavenly life there. They face adventures daily, they fight for life, still, they live a satiated life and never complain to anybody:

They gather at one place
 Sing, dance and gambol
 Till they drop exhausted
 In the slumber's arms
 To wake up the next day
 Amidst boisterous laughter and jolly mood.(Gupta 51)

He adores the culture of India where mother and father are considered much akin to God. Mother is the 'beacon of light' and father is 'venerable, adorable and lovable'. On the other hand, the poet is very sad on the 'growing insensitivity' of the people when they do not pay heed to the cries and pains of the people around them. They seem to be enjoying the bloodshed, corpses, and he feels that the 'feeling of love, compassion sympathy might help in sharpening our deadened sensitivity'.(Gupta 59)He is sensual enough to the feelings of the natives, and his feelings range from slum dwellers to God. He keen eye never leaves any stigma on the face of India without scorching it. His songs of India are the songs of the world through which he wishes to spread his message of love and brotherhood in the whole world.

Works Cited

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