

Manmohan's Neel Kanth

A senior official in Central Intelligence Bureau and a Ph D in literature, Manmohan is a respectable critic and a noticeable poet. Despite being deeply insightful, his poetry hardly poses any problem of communication; contrasting his prose. Author of 6 anthologies like *Sur-Sanket*, *Namit*, *Ath* etc.; his poetry appeals unswervingly to rationality because of its cogent content; it also taps soul of reader as the poet is unassuming; as unpretentious as the nature is.

The opening poem *Vapsi* (Going Back) of Manmohan's latest book *Neelkanth* (The Blue Jay) is key to his world-view. Intimidated by suspicious environment, several behavioral patterns have introverted to their roots, swings have gone back to waters, winds to valleys; fragrances returned to flowers and melodious notes towards the necks that produce them. Similarly, the language is also misplaced; and the lost 'word' is vulnerably in search of its meaning. According to poet, someone has to make an attempt to correct the circumstances so that the trees may not merely be visible, they should also *exist*. *Neelkanth* is Manmohan's poetic attempt to find meaningful answers to complex issues of human existence.

First he establishes the significance of language; its absence makes us non-existent. The poet knows that language per se is unable to give life to dead and can't feed an infant, because it can't replace anything; but surely it has a potential to carve some place for virtually everything. This explains Manmohan's commitment (*Ahad*) to write about 'unseen dreams', 'strange acquaintances', 'unvisited places', and 'unwanted relations'. Manmohan likes to give poetic expression to:

Those truths that bothered him most

The botherations that gave him pleasure

The ideas that couldn't become practice

The practices that were not supported by ponderings

The process of traveling back to roots to find contemporary relevance takes him to the lap of nature; for him the nature also serves as a sign-system that makes sense to human beings; the phenomenon is well explained in *Chiria Ghar* (The Zoo). To flay his fears of tumble down, the poet gets strength from ‘waterfall’, which actually inspires him to be dynamic. If one likes to generate *Bhagirathi*, one shall have to go back to *Gangotri*; how can ocean be churned without becoming part of *Naag-lok*. In ‘*Sarp-Joon*’ he asserts that primary instinct of humans remain primordial: the mystery of nature gives him pleasure and inspiration. (*Rahas*). But he still wants mankind to always remember that we’re in this universe to perform a role, which is distinct from other species: *Bhoomika* (The Role)

Some poems like *Booha* (The Door) and *Virlaan* (The Crevices) represent top-level Punjabi poetry. The obvious metaphors transport their readers to a realm where multiple levels of human psyche are being explored:

In doors,
Walls, relations or in minds
Wherever they are,
The fissures terminate
Distinction of inside and exterior
Because interior gazes outside
And the exterior watches inside
Crevices of doors
Turn the knockings into terror.

Manmohan is full of fresh and apt imagery that matches and grows with his thoughts. His power to confess makes him discrete and sober; his love poetry is also thoughtful. But he is reluctant to issue statements; if he does, they’re not absolute; he knows the importance of relative values. Manmohan’s verse is pregnant with passion, prowess and more promise.