



Khetarpal's Voice of Poetry Defends Indian Culture and Its Glory

By Dr. Shujaat Hussain

Milton's characters, for the most part, are products of imagination. By contrast, Dr. Dalip Khetarpal creates his figures out of lived experience and cultural reality. This lends his poetry both authenticity and force, delighting readers with vivid explorations and prompting critics to hail it as a significant contribution to the history of Indian English poetry.

Dr. Khetarpal's distinctive strength lies in establishing the relevance and worth of his characters through reasoning supported by direct observation. His poetry often assumes the stance of an eyewitness, silencing doubts and leaving no room for evasions. His sublimity of thought and refined sensibility elevate him above many of his contemporaries, giving his work a stature of enduring greatness.

His choice of chiselled, elevated diction has carried Indian English poetry to new heights, fusing language with sentiment into a style of rare sublimity. In his poems, protagonists are not figments of fancy but drawn from reality, often exposing paradoxes in places deemed sacred. It is bitterly ironic that shrines attracting endless devotees are sometimes tainted by politics, exploitation, and even crime. Themes of relevance, truth, sublimity, and the protection of vulnerable sections of society—especially women—permeate his verse. Disturbingly, but with unsparing moral courage, he exposes the hypocrisy of priests and holy men, as in his poem *Spirituality and Sensuality—Oddest Admixture*. This can be illustrated by the heinous Kathua temple incident. More examples can be cited, and to keep such heinous crimes a secret, would mean that Nirbhaya tragedy is supported. The poem condemns the desecration of sacred space, equating corrupt priests with Satan, and warns against silence that conceals crime. His fearless exposure of temple priests' hypocrisy exemplifies his commitment to cleansing society of its ills. Sacred spaces, he insists, must remain sacred, unsullied by debauchery or exploitation.

In the Preface of the book, *Refractions*, Alan Jacobs (UK) who is among the best critics of the world, aptly remarked: '*Dr Dalip Khetarpal may be termed a brilliant poetic innovator and at the same time a poetic genius. He went on to further say, 'I cannot think of any other contemporary poet who has ever dared to tackle major issues, and issues such as common debauchery in temples, including philosophic questions, with such courage, challenging poetic skill, and has succeeded so well.'* PCK Prem, a former senior bureaucrat, and who's also among the eminent writers of the global literary scenario of today, also eulogized Dr Dalip thus: '*Poems of Dr Dalip Khetarpal are unique in perception. He explores areas of human life hitherto unattended and makes a lasting imprint, striking verses of Refractions tease and irritate intellects; temple-going pious men and women, coerce man to think, analyze and arrive at a logical conclusion about objective, identity and existence of life and spread evils from educational centres to places of worship.'*

Khetarpal's conscience and purified soul compel him to raise such issues, echoing the fire that burned away the evil of 'Ravana'. His artistry condemns vulgarity and exposes the disgraceful actions of corrupt clerics, making his poetry a voice of social revolution.

His first four poetry anthologies—*Fathoming Infinity*, *Refractions*, *Sculptured Psyche*, and *Weird Musings*—form the four pillars of modern Indian English poetry. These works embody the soul of Indian culture and affirm the conviction that "the soul never perishes." *Fathoming Infinity* (2012) first edition, and (2015) second revised edition contains 46 poems, including *Pyromaniacs' Diwali*, *A Dialogue with Pitiabale God*, *Who Will Kill the Monster?*, and *Dark Shades of Man and Woman*.



These awaken, enlighten, and provoke reflection. In *Pyromaniacs' Diwali*, Khetarpal satirizes the shallow excitement of fireworks as a distorted expression of suppressed violence, contrasting it with the true symbolic victory of good over evil. *Refractions* (2016) offers 21 poems, each sparkling with insight and passion. Works like *Catastrophic Flaws*, *Spirituality and Sensuality—Oddest Admixture*, and *Love Conquers All* demonstrate his range—from exposing corruption to celebrating love's transformative power:

*A true lover with a sober and tamed ego
Can melt a stony beloved
Into molten wax.*

Love conquers all...

Sculptured Psyche (2017), is praised in the Preface by Greek poetess Kaperdeli Eftichia. She explores philosophical, religious, social, and psychological realms. The poems therein interrogate conscience, destiny, and corruption with penetrating depth. *Weird Musings* (2018) ventures into the darkened world of social media and spiritual hypocrisy. Critics such as Jen Walls, Neil Leadbeater, and others highlight how Khetarpal combines satire with compassion, exposing falsity while retaining humane understanding.

Critics across the globe—Dr. Maria Miraglia, Alan Jacobs, Yayati Madan G. Gandhi, and others acknowledge Khetarpal's originality, courage, and penetrating insight. His poetry dramatizes ordinary realities, infuses humor, and yet fearlessly unmask corruption in temples, bureaucracy, politics, and society. For him, discussion—rather than argument—is the path to truth, and his verse invites readers to engage, reflect, and contribute to collective betterment.

Dr. Khetarpal is not only a poet but also a critic, reviewer, columnist, and fearless crusader for truth, human rights, and justice. In his work, literary commitment merges with social reform. He opposes literary lobbyism, false glamour, and exploitation, while encouraging emerging voices. His poetry is revolutionary because it insists on authenticity, nobility, and conscience. His ability to expose falsehood in a single line makes him both feared and admired in literary circles. Unlike those who thrive on lobbyism, he remains uncompromisingly independent, defending the genuine spirit of poetry. His voice resonates with that of other eminent contemporary poets, echoing the cultural legacy of Kabir, Ghalib, Premchand, and others. This power stems from his punctilious mind, creative prowess, and the dynamic forces that animate his psyche. With unflagging fervor, he works to enrich and beautify the literary horizon, making it both meaningful and captivating, while also extending generous support, tampered with truth, to budding poets and novice writers:

*Poetry, infused with passion and emotion
Flows from a poet's powerful imagination,
Creating an art, exquisite.*

He seems harsh, but is correct in his approach towards the minor poets:

*A minor poet, especially,
Wallows in the fake glory of a fool's paradise.
Extricating himself from this rut is not only painful,
But suicidal also, for a self-glorified poet
Sees and knows not
What he really is!*

Delving deeper objectively, the poet affirms:



*Pitiable and aesthetically tragic
That even a great creative artist
Has sometimes to live even in fool's paradise
But, should we survive by wallowing in illusion?
Is this the way this ignorant prejudicial world goes on?*

In India, the voices of eminent contemporary poets—such as late Anil K. Sharma, Prof. R. K. Singh, Prof. R. K. Bhushan, PCK Prem, Asad Rezzwi, Wafa Naqvi, Dr. O. P Arora, Dr Shaleen Singh, Rajiv Khandelwal, and Dalip Khetarpal—resonate with the soulful echoes of great masters like Mirza Ghalib and Munshi Premchand. Among them, Asad Rezzwi stands out not only as a distinguished poet but also for his melodious recitation of *ghazals*, *nazms*, *naats* (poetry in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), and *manqabats* (Sufi devotional poems honoring Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Prophet's family). Audiences cherish both his voice and his *kalam* (poetry).

The world will agree that poetry is the most beautiful art ever created—an art with the rare power to transform lives. Today, we may not have poets like Wordsworth, Milton, Shakespeare, Forster, Allama Iqbal, Saba Naqvi, and many more, yet Dalip Khetarpal possesses a rare sensitivity to the demands of the age, i.e. what a poet feels, and what the audience is meant to think and feel, which Khetarpal captures with remarkable fidelity. At the very least, poetry compels readers to think. It serves as a profound medium for conveying messages that resonate deeply. The meaning and essence contained in verse flow naturally into the soul and leave their imprint upon the mind. However, it is the listener or reader who must be equipped to grasp its depth. When received with understanding, poetry, through the sheer force of its expressive power, unfailingly touches the heart.”

In addition, Dalip has made his mark as a short story writer, with numerous programs on All India Radio and various television channels to his credit. Most importantly, his theory and practice of poetry play a pivotal role in shaping the thoughts and emotions of contemporary poets, offering them both vision and direction. For him, poetry is not ornamentation but revelation—an art that must awaken society. He rejects plagiarism, mediocrity, and false self-glorification. His standards are uncompromising, and his critiques of minor poets, though harsh, are grounded in a quest for truth and excellence. His writings span philosophy, psychology, religion, and politics, but always return to the moral responsibility of the poet: to illuminate, reform, and inspire. Khetarpal's voice blends fact with conscience, purity with rebellion. He breaks conventional barriers and insists that truth, humanity, and sincerity alone are the foundation of lasting poetry. His works, therefore, do not merely entertain—they enlighten, heal, and call for change.

He reminds us that poetry is not a retreat from reality but a beacon for society, capable of igniting reform and defending culture. His legacy is not in awards or honors but in the respect, admiration, and awakening he evokes in readers. Truly, his poetry stands as a sentinel of Indian culture and its glory.

Dr. Shujaat Hussain
Founder, President, United Spirit of Writers Academy
Poet, Critic, Author, Thinker, and Reformist.

4/771, Friends Colony
Aligarh -202002 (U.P.)
Mobile: 7060888223
Email: drhussainpoetcritic@gmail.com