

“I Do Not Belong to April”- Review of *Alleys are Filled with Future Alphabets* By Gopal Lahiri

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Author: **Gopal Lahiri**

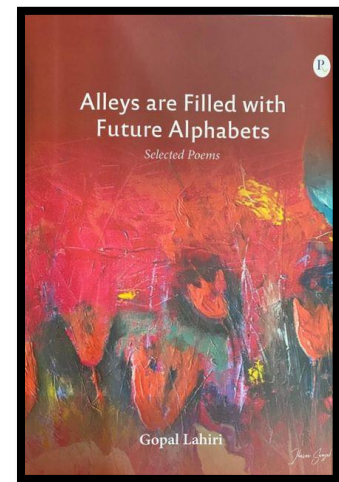
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In terms of Postmodern poetry, we have come a long way in transcending the fixities of border, spatial-temporal consistencies, and limitations in art. Knowing the praxis of modern and Postmodern poetry illumines how diverse art forms often juxtapose myriad human emotions with sliding instances of existential questions, identity formations and acceptance of alternative shelters across the world. Poet Gopal Lahiri's book *Alleys are Filled with Future Alphabets* contains selected poems divided into multiple segments like 'Voyages In', 'Voyages Out', 'Cityscape Silhouettes', 'Macrocosm', 'Haiku Series and Micro Poems', 'Travel Diaries' and 'Pandemic and Resilience'. Several theories of poetry highlight forms, content, emotions, sentiment and the cohesion of art and beautiful objects that stay forever through sublime poetic lines. As the world-renowned academician and critic F.M. Connell highlights in *A Text Book for the Study of Poetry*:

“It is not sufficient that poetry be emotional; the emotion must be noble... It must be noted in the first place that the nobility of any primary emotion depends upon the object that excites it, and we cannot rightly estimate the former without considering it in its relations to the latter.” (Connell, 32) Gopal Lahiri's poems take us to that object of excitement that only refined poetry can sustain. The idea of emotion-sharing is often in terse words, with non-manipulated, swift flow of his poetic diction, the

visionary zeal contemplating upon the finer aspects of the citylife and the changing bewilderment of human life. The first part of the book, 'Voyages In' highlight emotions related to how in the larger layers of the firmament engage in a relentless struggle in giving birth to human life and time. There are poems named 'Departure', 'Summer of Discontent', 'Seeking Change', 'Long Back', 'God's Room' and 'Holy Water' are profound in their temperament, channelizing the larger, unified mystic force that poetry embraces even amidst the mundaneness of life. The poet writes:

"I have slowly rebuilt my cells here.

I multiply everyday image and store inside,
the scars are numberless and invisible,
seeming to ignore the pain of isolation." ([Displaced](#), 19)

or when the poetic prism tries to include the evening metaphor accumulated in the silken happy hours:

"Borrow those silken happy hours
I want to count the time layers,
smell the minutes and tiny seconds
floating like petals in dense tequila,
Under the blue death light, the images
quivering in a halo fire..." ([Evening Metaphor](#), 23)

The sheer brilliance of the poetic lines reflected in the gossamer happy hours of life make the poet count and affirm the time layers, the dissection of time into minutes and miniscule seconds that move on, quiver, float in the embraces of a halo fire. The ministry of nature and a superior exterior force is in close proximity to how a poetic endeavour takes proper shape. There is a thoughtful delineation of what and how the poet feels while he tries to rediscover his own identity and spirit. Looking within, introspecting the various probabilities and possibilities of the invisible targets do not always afflict him. The lines are not perfunctory in nature, on the other hand, they adhere to the tenets of what we call poetic ennobling of the highest kind, in other words, the voyages in and out talk of aesthetic gratification of the highest order. For instance, in the poem 'Homecoming', the poet writes:

"In a world full of hope and despair,
the pace of time has swept all that into the past,
The marble floor is bathing in sun light,
the aroma of flowers wafts in..." ([Homecoming](#), 41)

The evolution of a poetry book as a cultural text is, therefore, an ongoing process. Lack of verbosity in alienating and glorifying the poetic synthesis is not something new, but for Lahiri, the poetic peregrination is more about the reaffirmation of the cultural artifacts of the mind, volition of the pen, a constant tussle between the practical, permeable and the impractical and the impermeable. As Vivek Dwivedi enunciates in his work on *The Living Indian Critical Tradition*:

"The Indian theorist has often felt that India's point of view has remained ignored. Or, to put it differently, the west has missed the Indian theoretical situation as it actually is. Therefore the voice of India has either not been heard or has been misunderstood and misrepresented." ([Dwivedi](#), 9)

Now, from here if we take a recourse to setting up the Indian voice from the diversified postcolonial perspective, we find how the growth of Indian poetry has reached a globalized context. For Lahiri, poetry is about this globe-trotting, physically, aesthetically, psychologically, and semantically as well. The burnt-oil lamps that weave new stories every now and then is a restructure and reimagination of the earlier poetic tendencies. What is the role of global poetry? When does poetry transcend borders? What does it take for a poet to infringe upon the orthodoxies of poetry to usher in something new? What exactly compose the phases of dynamic literary matters? These few questions need to be examined if we want to delve deeper into the realms of modern poetry. As the poet ends the poem 'Mother Earth', he takes in the ecocritical perspective where nature can hurt, if left ignored and neglected:

“Ride on a wheel not moving
scrub your memory with the red earth.
long life rests on your prayers.” ([Mother Earth](#), 85)

Lahiri has also included Haikus and micro poems as part of this collection. Mastering the art of Haiku is never easy, but he has done it with elan. For instance, in Haiku series 3, one poem goes thus:

“twilight
colours spillage
clouds in flame.” ([Haiku Series-3](#), 97)

His poems are interspersed with images of light and darkness, melting metaphors that meander through the modernist lens of understanding the distinct aspect of Indian poetry. The shelter sought in the oscillation between the permanence of art and the transience of life does not falter at any point. What the poet visualizes, has a tremendous impact in terms of negotiating the known surfaces of poetic aestheticism. Therein lies the superiority of the poet.

References

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“Rising Star” Award for non-fiction category at New Town Book Fair, Kolkata. She has been the recipient of the “Charuchandra Ghosh Memorial Award” for securing the highest marks from Calcutta University. At present she is pursuing her Ph. D from Ranchi University (submission in February 2022). She is the Chief Editor of a bilingual biannual academic journal Litinfinitive, with more than 14 indexing of international repute and archived in 57 international libraries. Apart from academic publications in reputed national and international journals, her translations and literary articles have been published in Bengali and notable English journals and magazines in India, Bangladesh, and South Africa. Her areas of interest include Indian English poetry, Indian English drama, Feminism and cultural politics, and South Asian Diasporic Studies. She has passed 5th year in Rabindra Sangeet, with distinction and 4th year in classical music from Prayag Sangeet Samiti, Allahabad. She is a trained painter in oil, acrylic, water colour and charcoal.