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Vision of India in Manas Bakshi's Dream India Dream

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an in-depth analysis of the poetry of Manas Bakshi, a notable modern English poet known for his twelve collections that touch upon various universal concerns and human experiences. Through an examination of select poems from his works, including "Dream India Dream," "In the Offing," "A Poem for the Common People," "Break Dance of Democracy," "NEWS" "N" "VIEWS," "The Uprooted Rohingya," "CONFRONTING COVID-19," "O MOTHER INDIA," "PULWAMA," "DREAM INDIA, DREAM," and "SOUL OF INDIA SURVIVES," the study explores Bakshi's diverse perspectives on contemporary India. Bakshi's poetry delves into themes such as environmental degradation, socioeconomic issues, political disillusionment, societal decay, terrorism, and the impact of global crises. The poet's critique extends to capitalism, corruption, religious extremism, and the exploitation of marginalized populations. Through vivid imagery and thought-provoking criticism, Bakshi's poetry urges introspection and advocates for positive societal change. His outlook on India oscillates between hope and skepticism, emphasizing the need for a collective vision to transcend existing societal structures and work towards a more compassionate, just, and peaceful India. Overall, Manas Bakshi emerges as a visionary poet who skillfully captures the complexities of Indian culture and calls for societal transformation.

Manas Bakshi is a well-known modern English poet with a sizable body of work. Undoubtedly, his twelve books of poetry should make him a notable figure in Indo-English poetry. Notably, eminent worldwide publishers, including Authors Press, Cambridge India, and Rupa & Co, have released several of his poetry collections. His poetry embodies objectivity and distancing. In typical poetry outpourings, it has been the manifestation of the inner heart and external reactions. He is a gifted poet with exceptional credentials, a visionary soul, and an astute observer. If one looks at his twelve collections, one will find that Manas Bakshi has touched

upon every aspect/object of universe. These are what I can describe universal concerns, anxieties, and textures of human life (Bakshi 1).

Regarding his works, the poet undoubtedly cultivates a very diversified perspective. The poet has delved into a wide realm of possibilities. One constant that the poetic self-wades in the ambiguous alley of the collections where moral questions and morals present a quandary is optimism. He is exceptionally skilled in both poetry form and expressive felicity. His poetry art and felicity of expression have won him several honors and recognitions, and prestigious worldwide publishers have published some of his collections of poems. He has countless accolades and distinctions to his name. *Dream India Dream*, his most recent collection, released in 2022, is a striking illustration of his idea of India as a country that, despite obstacles and inconsistencies, aspires to realize its aspirations of growth, development, and harmony. His poetry inspires and enlightens people while significantly contributing to Indian English literature. The themes of Manas Bakshi's poetry are myriad. Prof Alisha Vanda Larka observes:

"The themes in Manas Bakshi's poetry are contemporary and deals with the current issues and at times the issues are foresighted. The poems of Manas Bakshi are in itself a self-contained story where he reveals the destruction and devastation caused by human follies. His self-contained poems create the impression of complete events and concepts. All the poetic collection of Bakshi dominates the theme of human concern, love, human hypocrisy, loneliness, betrayal, nature degradation etc, all these themes are human centric and revolves round them, the poet charges human for their disintegration of human values and dignity. He uncovers what is concealed and in doing that his tone becomes philosophical. He believes humanity to be the religion above all." (Larka 241)

In the poem „In the Offing“ from Manas Bakshi's book *Dream India Dream*, the poet powerfully depicts the widespread pollution that engulfs modern life, both literally and symbolically. The vision of a mind engulfed in bathos and survival textures snake-like coiled depicts a society coping with a plethora of issues. Bakshi criticizes the pollution of values and societal disintegration, highlighting the deterioration that has been ingrained in our collective psyche.

The poet's perception of India in this poem appears to be one of worry and criticism. He emphasizes the contaminated status of the environment and the society fabric, in which engrained values are declining. The notion of feasting on a formalin-soaked flesh and the supremacy of a vitiated intellect offers a bleak depiction of the nation's current problems.

To Bakshi's greater vision for India, he anticipates a metamorphosis, a dream that extends beyond the terrible facts presented in this poem. His compilation might be interpreted as a call to introspection, pushing society to confront these challenges and strive for a cleaner, more moral, and compassionate India. The graphic depiction of molestation, rape, and murder of persons ranging from schoolgirls to street beggars serves as a sobering reminder of the cultural malaise that requires immediate treatment for the goal of a better India to become a reality. One may see the following excerpt:

Nothing's pollution free today-
Life embroiled in bathos, Mind too polluted
Textures of survival Snake-like coiled;
Pollution of myriad types Knowingly or unknowingly

Penetrating public life, Ingrained values decline

Rots sap our social fabric; (15)

He critically examines the impact of capitalism, terrorism, and the change from socialism to consumerism on the ordinary people of India in his poem „A Poem for the Common People.“ The poem emphasizes the vulnerability of ordinary individuals who face the weight of global crises such as outsourcing terrorism, and the ramifications of shifting socioeconomic ideologies. Bakshi’s critique of capitalism and consumerism emphasizes the exploitation of regular people, pointing out that ordinary individuals frequently suffer even in the quest for economic advancement. The poem stresses the wealth gap between the wealthy and poor, with the middle class trapped in the crossfire. Capitalism says:

pink slip is natural,

Stop outsourcing to save yourself.

Terrorism tells: killing is natural,

Stop loving people of other religious faith.

Good bye Socialism: no more pseudo socialists’ sermon!

Hello consumerism: no more petty political jargon!

The superpower’s selling soaps Who’s the target?

The common people. (22)

The poet encourages ordinary people to break away from the colonial mindset, recognizing their hardships and refusing to affiliate themselves with powers that exploit them. As shown in this poem, Bakshi’s image of India resonates with a call for self-awareness and tenacity in the face of social obstacles, challenging ordinary people to resist becoming easy targets and actively join in the fight for a better life as third-world citizens. Observe the following lines:

O common people, shake off colonial hang-over

You have neither an attractive stage

Nor a sizeable audience to address!

Have to fight all along your life

The battle of being third world citizens!

Don’t allow yourselves anymore

To be their colonial friends: An easy target. ... (23)

The poem „Break Dance of Democracy“ critically views India’s political scene. The vivid depiction of democracy as a celebration that appears to glorify poverty and illiteracy reflects a loss of faith in the genuine substance of democratic norms. The term „shadow of democracy“ refers to the impression that what looks democratic may be a semblance, particularly among the weak and trusting populace. The words about the mind not being represented in wall writings and the ubiquity of digital media replete with silly innuendos and mocking vibes allude to a

disillusionment with the openness and sincerity of political discourse. Bribes being used as a trump card suggests a perception of corruption overshadowing the democratic process.

What is there in mind
Not reflected in wall writings -
Digital media agog with
Ridiculous innuendos and sarcastic vibes, Only trump card:
Bribe to suppress the stinking bribe.(35)
The poet adds:
Use vile tricks,
Play the minority card,
Hurl mindless invectives,
Catch up with the wind
Blowing to hoodwink all
Aspiring for a better way of living
Across the vicissitudes
Of vote-bank-politics. (35)

In this setting, Bakshi's view of India stresses the manipulation and dishonesty inherent in politics. To obtain votes, the poem critiques the use of foul techniques, using the minority card, and shouting senseless invectives. The poem expresses a desire for a better way of life that transcends the superficial and deceptive characteristics of vote-bank politics. So, it emphasizes India's need for a more authentic and principled democratic system. Manas Bakshi's poem "NEWS" "N" "VIEWS" portrays the contradictory character of modern India. Bakshi figuratively shows the media's ephemeral emphasis on societal concerns with vivid imagery of a buffalo and an egret. The poet emphasizes the media's obsessive pursuit of discovering political scandals, even though these disclosures swiftly vanish from public consciousness.

An inside story
Hitting the newspaper headlines,
Finding place as breaking news in TV coverage
Takes little time to fade.
Public memory's too short
To avenge the tainted power-wielders' offence--(42)

The verse poignantly reflects Bakshi's vision of a society grappling with environmental degradation, unemployment, and corruption. The mention of "poison in polluted air and water" and "jobless millions crucified everyday" unveils a grim reality. Despite these challenges, the poem suggests a collective hope for change, emphasizing the perseverance of a populace still anticipating a better future.

The final twist, an economic offender's son arranging a honeymoon on Mars, satirizes society's inclination to be sidetracked by dramatic news, even in the face of grave difficulties. This contrast critiques misguided priorities and the fleeting nature of public attention.

Bakshi's image of India appears to be one in which the media plays a significant role in influencing public perception, often directing attention away from essential concerns and toward more dramatic but insignificant news. The poem emphasizes the importance of maintaining a prolonged focus on significant societal concerns to effect genuine change.

The poem „The Uprooted Rohingya“ by Manas Bakshi powerfully conveys the unsettling sensation of a displaced individual, conjuring a sense of upheaval without a seismic event. The lack of an actual earthquake becomes a metaphor for the fundamental upheavals within the human heart and geopolitical terrain. The poet uses imagery deftly, depicting cracks appearing with the “enormity of untimely dusk,” implying the impending coming of unanticipated obstacles. In the story, the protagonist goes to bed quietly only to wake up in a contested region invaded by metaphorical locusts, representing battle's devastating powers. The sudden change of a once-comfortable country into a furnace of ethnic cleansing underscores the grim reality that many Rohingya people today.

The land he lived
Believing it was his
Had turned overnight I
Into a boiling point
Of ethnic cleansing! (45)

Bakshi's worldview, as depicted in this poem, appears to criticize the fragility of human security and the ephemeral nature of imagined stability. The sharp difference between the protagonist's night and day emphasizes the sudden and unpleasant nature of displacement, calling into question the concept of a stable and unchanging home.

In relation to Bakshi's larger vision for India, the poem may serve as a poignant statement on the importance of empathy, understanding, and inclusive policy in a varied society. By focusing on the situation of the Rohingya, the poet invites readers to consider the common responsibility of protecting human dignity and rights, developing a vision of India that extends compassion beyond her boundaries.

In his poem “CONFRONTING COVID-19,” Bakshi reveals a critical perspective on modern society's façade, highlighting the continuation of primordial impulses underlying current urbanity. The poem explores the dichotomy of an apparently developed mindset coexisting with fundamental, primal desires. Bakshi comments on modern man's desire for worldly wealth, symbolically linking it to the worldwide catastrophe of COVID-19, which he labels as a man-made virus that erodes the purity of the Earth.

Nothing's sanctified or preserved pollution-free for the posterity,
The show is on but the showbiz has lost substance!
Why turn the pages of history?
Isn't mediaeval tyranny rampant today Behind the mask of civilization?

Dark patches of history can be traced

To some darkest phases even of the modern age;

As expressed in this poem, the poet's perspective of India emphasizes the difficult balance between growth and environmental preservation. He criticizes current showbiz's superficiality, implying a loss of substance. Bakshi examines the emerging historical narrative, finding analogies between medieval despotism and contemporary civilization's hidden threats. In doing so, he emphasizes the painful times of solitude and urges for a rethinking of the principles that guide our society destiny. The long poem "CONFRONTING COVID-19" captures the multifaceted impact of the pandemic. The imagery of fluttering wings symbolizes a collective struggle, with individuals from all walks of life confined to quarantine, seeking solace in prayer. The poet laments the loss of open spaces, emphasizing the contrast between the yearning for childhood freedom and the concrete jungle that reality has become.

Bakshi portrays a sad depiction of the disturbed life-stream, emphasizing the necessity for an environment free of the Coronavirus-affected world's vicious spiral. The poem considers the absurdity of people being imprisoned indoors while certain animals wander freely—a shift in power dynamics, almost as if nature were recovering its reign.

The mention of migratory birds and rural lakes offers a stark contrast of purity and peace in the midst of mayhem. However, the grim truth is revealed by the condition of migrant laborers who are hungry and long to return home. This contrast acts as a call to introspection, pushing readers to consider the discrepancies and hardships that various areas of society encountered throughout the epidemic.

The poem appears to call for a reassessment of priorities and a return to a more harmonious relationship with nature. It encourages readers to reflect on the societal inequities exposed by the epidemic and calls for collective introspection and constructive change.

„O MOTHER INDIA“ reflects the poet's anguish and indignation at the state of his country and its people. Poverty, cruelty, despotism, and injustice are among the awful features of Indian existence highlighted by the poet. He contrasts India's natural beauty and spiritual treasures with the societal issues and human tragedies that diminish its magnificence.

O mother India

How can this undulating evening wind

Blowing over the golden paddy field

Make her check tears now

Remembering her father's face? (52)

He challenges the people's carelessness and apathy in failing to preserve and serve their nation. He calls on them to get up and fight for their rights and dignity. He also presents himself as a dedicated son willing to give up all for his mother India. The poem is an impassioned call for social transformation and national awakening.

O mother India,

Wipe your eyes -

Let darkness celebrate seven decades of independence

Till this holy land is awakened by winter-end sunrays:

Stirred-up human conscience. (53)

Manas Bakshi's poem „O Mother India“ harshly condemns the deceit and corruption afflicting Indian society. The poet exposes those who pretend to love their nation yet abuse its resources and people for personal gain. He compares the urban elite, who enjoy contemporary conveniences, with the rural poor, who face hardship and persecution. He also criticizes political leaders for being more vicious and selfish than wild animals. He bemoans the predicament of the majority, who are caught in a cycle of debt and insecurity. He begs his nation to wipe away her sorrows and give her hope for a brighter future. He envisions a day when the light of wisdom and righteousness will banish the darkness of ignorance and injustice. He advocates for a resurgence of the moral and spiritual qualities that define India. The poem expresses the poet's deep love and care for his nation and its people.

„PULWAMA“ conveys the spirit of a turbulent night tarnished by the aftermath of a terror incident. The figurative “eyes of darkness” act as a periscope, observing prohibited places beneath the cover of night. The rich artwork portrays a heartbreaking picture of a world in conflict, as the sparkling eyes dig into the anguish of many things, from canine moans to fall leaf murmurs.

The contrast of “fulgent yesterday” and “fulgent today” emphasizes the rapid transition from calm to upheaval. The poem captures society's challenges, from modern man's solitude to the fate of sidewalk beggars. The poet expertly builds a tapestry of emotions that resonate with the collective anguish of the surroundings.

The groaning of rickety dogs

The woes of footpath beggars

The seclusion of modern man

The murmur of autumn leaves.

Eyes of darkness

Fulgent today

Facing the cinder

Of a throttled insurgence

Last night's cold wave Couldn't douse -

The mention of Pulwama sets a harsher tone, revealing the aftermath of a heinous terror assault. The suggestion of a “throttled insurgence” and the soil splitting in protest elicits feelings of restlessness and resistance against barbarism. The cry for vengeance reflects the victims' suffering and demands justice.

In essence, “PULWAMA” is a moving examination of the night's canvas contaminated by the aftereffects of horror, employing strong visuals and emotions to illuminate the social scars that

need healing and justice. The poem “DREAM INDIA, DREAM” expresses a picture of India that alternates between optimism and cynicism. The disjointed form provides a feeling of disorder, mimicking the complexity of the dream.

The poem’s first summons to action conveys a challenge, a call to overcome challenges. The poet enters the dream, where hopeful faces with a daring attitude appear, hoping to effect good change. The poem, however, takes a pessimistic turn, depicting a harsh world in which dreams frequently disintegrate after an insurgent eruption and the muffled screams of the disadvantaged.

The Indian dream is painted with opposing imagery, ranging from a minister-observer in a helicopter bringing aid to victims to the anointing of a leader’s son, symbolizing the continuity of dynasty politics. The poet poses a profound inquiry regarding the dread of speaking up, implying a suffocated society in which speaking up is laden with danger.

Dream India, dream

Dream with a minister-observer from helicopter

Showering reliefs for drought or flood victims,

Dream India, dream

Of anointing of a leader’s son

As the next man to promise you another dream (80)

“Dream India, dream” becomes a mantra, underscoring the call for a reformed nation. The imagined fantasy is set against the harsh background of a society that is resistant to change, staying semi-feudal, authoritarian, and hereditary. The mention of persons in different jobs, such as a slum maid and a high-rise CEO, emphasizes the ongoing discrepancies.

The poem illustrates the conflict between ambitions for a better India and the harsh realities that stand in the way of such goals. It is a meditation on the difficulties of societal transformation, pushing for a collective dream that transcends existing mechanisms and results in actual change. We may see the following lines in support of the above statement:

Dream India, dream

Digital India dream, Swachh Bharat dream

Dream of a change again and again - if, at all, there be!(81)

One of the collection’s most important poems, „SOUL OF INDIA SURVIVES,“ examines a vision of India that transcends age-old myths and digs into the eternal truths and ideals that characterize the nation’s core. The poem begins with the clear declaration that the essence of India is located in intrinsic facts and ideals rather than in age-old myths. It stresses the atmosphere of trust in divine life, which eternally enlightens and directs, functioning as a lighthouse amid anarchism and terrorism. The interruptions generated by these problems obscure the vision for a brief while, impeding the typical road to wealth.

Soul of India

Not in its age-old myths

But in the inherent truths and values,
In the aura of faith in life divine,
Forever to enlighten us
Showing the way to survive
Amid tumultuous and convulsive
Vortex of anarchism and terrorism
Obfuscating, for the moment, our vision
Disrupting normal way to thrive- (82)

A noteworthy feature is the poet's rejection of religious extremism, claiming that the spirit of India is unaffected by such assertions. The reference to Kazi Nazrul's fiery, rebellious lyrics emphasizes a plea for spiritual peace and warns against religious discord. This depicts an India founded on unity and inclusion, fighting divisive influences that undermine the societal fabric.

The poem highlights India's spirit via Tagore's works, stressing the magnificent creation that opens eyes to the genuine „Religion of Man.“ Tagore's timeless melodies of life, steeped with spiritual heritage, add to India's soul's radiance. The reference of the churning ocean stories denotes a break from mythological history, increasing the emphasis on the present.

Manas Bakshi's poem "SOUL OF INDIA SURVIVES" critically examines the status of India's socioeconomic fabric. The poem opens by opposing shallow depictions of the country found in commercial TV programs, emphasizing a need for deeper knowledge that goes beyond clichés.

The lack of a fight between gods and demons indicates a break from typical legendary wars, signifying a shift in emphasis. According to the poet, the present conflict is between suffering humanity and persons showing animal-like conduct. The term "chameleonic presence" denotes a deceptive and unexpected character that must be unravelled, reflecting the difficulties of 21st-century human relationships.

The metaphor of the "churned ocean of their mind" captures the turbulence of human ideas. The combined discharge of poisonous communal anger and transcendent love represents an inward duality. The poet expresses apprehension about the future, doubting humanity's fate in the face of these opposing forces.

The poem explores the ramifications of brutal slaughter motivated by hostility, intolerance, fury, and hatred. It serves as a warning reflection on the potential self-destruction that these negative feelings may cause. On the other hand, the statement of „love for all His beloved creations“ and the proclamation of „vasudhaivakutumbakam“ underline the value of global love and fraternity.

Ruthless bloodshed
Full of animosity, intolerance, wrath and hate
To bring our own ruin
Or, love for all His beloved creations
And brotherhood of mankind pronouncing vasudhaivakutumbakam:

The world is my family. (83)

In essence, „SOUL OF INDIA SURVIVES“ critically evaluates India’s modern issues, emphasizing the need to decipher the complexity of human behaviour and advocating for a change toward love, fraternity, and understanding in order to preserve the survival of the nation’s soul.

Manas Bakshi’s poetry is examined in depth, revealing a varied worldview that digs into the intricacies of contemporary India. His writings address a wide range of problems, including the environment, socioeconomic concerns, political disillusionment, the fate of marginalized populations, and the impact of global crises such as COVID-19 and terrorism. According to PCK Prem Manas Bakshi’s “philosophical and contemporary anxieties lead to fumbling interpretation but cautious efforts to speak the truth of age drives the poet to an aura of self-created elegiac cosmos.” (166)

Bakshi’s poetry appears to be a mirror, reflecting the paradoxes and difficulties of Indian culture. The recurring themes of pollution, corruption, and societal degradation indicate a strong concern for the erosion of values and the nation’s fabric.

The poet’s ability to combine vivid imagery with thought-provoking criticism has a significant impact. Bakshi’s rhymes, whether criticizing capitalism, pondering on political duplicity, or addressing the situation of displaced people, convey a feeling of urgency for introspection and good change.

Furthermore, his outlook on India appears to be a mix of hope and skepticism. While he envisions a reformed and better India, he also depicts the terrible realities and hurdles that stand in the way of that vision. The repetition of phrases like “Dream India, dream” serves as a poignant refrain, emphasizing the persistent plea for a collective vision that transcends existing societal structures.

To conclude, Manas Bakshi emerges as a modern poet with a strong eye for sociological intricacies and a dedication to depicting India’s complicated fabric of struggles and hopes. His literary expressions are a call to action, asking readers to tackle the difficulties he clearly depicts and fight toward a more compassionate, just, and peaceful India.

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