Binod Mishra. *Multiple Waves*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, 2017. pp.xii + 51. Rs. 200. PB. ISBN: 978-81-84355-04-8.

Reviewed by
Dr. S. Somasundari Latha

Binod Mishra, a new voice in Indian Poetry in English is an academic and teaches English at IIT, Roorkee, Uttarakhand. He has twenty-two books to his credit. *Multiple Waves* is his second collection of poems. It contains forty six poems of variety of themes. He deals with vital issues of the contemporary society in simple and elegant words. His brilliant use of metaphor and simile help him to drive home his ideas wonderfully. Music and rhyme in his poems capture the attention of the readers.

There is spontaneity in Mishra's poems. He defines poem as "music of thought, a divine game". He resembles Wordsworth when he says, "A poem oozes like water drops" ("A Poem" 39). To him,

A poem is not born
but becomes
crossing the process
of churning and chiselling
a divine game controlled by none
but the Almighty. ("A Poem" 33-38)

He feels a poet should write that could delight not him but his readers. No doubt Mishra's poetry is a delightful dessert to the readers. He personifies poetry as a woman. Instead of glorifying the poets, Mishra insists on the responsibility of poets that they "should weigh despair and delight with equanimity".

Mishra's attempt to create awareness about preservation of nature shows his responsibility towards mother earth and humanity. Man's continuous exploitation of nature is described by him as "We put to test your perpetual rest" ("Nature" 15). Water is the nature's first girl child. He warns us about the consequences that train of thirsty families ready to kill each barely for a bowl of water is result of our failure to protect waterways. Like a prophet, he predicts what would happen if we continuously destroy waterways. It is pathetic to listen to the woeful ballad of the river which is gone unnoticed:

I too can have my private tears
that ooze out of my soggy shape
shouldering my own chimera to a forlorn land
where none can hear my woeful ballad ("What the Water Says" 19-22)

* *Assistant Professor of English, R.V. Govt. Arts College, Chengalpet, Tamil Nadu - 603 001, India. Email: slathajaya@gmail.com*

Have we ever heard about the chastity of water? Yes, Mishra feels for the loss of chastity of water because water ways are used as dumping yard by man. His rendition that the river and the bridge vouch for their fidelity to each other is remarkable. He presents the big truth that littering human filths and electronic wastes by man results in sterile womb of nature. His justification of crazy leopard entering into human habitats to terminate the growing greed of hungry generations is convincing. His poetry insists upon the co-existence of man, nature and animal.

Identity crisis which is the predicament of modern man is also dealt by Mishra in his poetry. He says identity is a misnomer, a flux, fixed one rusts and fair one fouls. Modern man loses his identity and takes many avatars. Centre, margin and binary opposites are the watch words of postcolonial critics. As a poet, he writes, "I watch the centre inching towards the margin/and the margin centring to write/new history for mankind." ("The Postman" 20-22). He criticizes the modern man's race like life. Man foolishly ignores safety rules and traffic signal in order to enjoy the thrill of speed that results in accidents. This shows the poet does not allow any important thing to escape from his minute observation.

Like a social commentator, Mishra depicts the mindset of younger generation that is obsessed with technology and dotcoms, and ignores the sick and old people. His painful portrayal of youngsters who keep themselves busy twittering, chirping, linking and hiding, absolutely forget the harsh reality of life. His mild attack on children who selfishly take care of their own family and leave their parentsunder emotional starvation is highly relevant to the present day. His comment about modern life style, "fed on pasteurized milk and modified food" ("The Rising Sun" 11) is thought provoking. Modern man's suffering because of 'loneliness' is depicted in "Call-Bell". Here a bed ridden woman longs for the call-bell announcing the arrival of the visitor since she is waiting for the final call.

As an academician his comments on present day education system which encourages rote learning and the performance in the answer scripts is really valuable. In the poem "Memory" he pours out how pens run and ruin students' rational drives since our education system supports only reproducing from one's memory and never encourages originality: "memory like a cluttered blackboard provides/a panacea to all problems solved by savant gurus." ("Memory" 19-20) He has voiced out how parents' money is being wasted as tuition fees and career counseling. One can feel Mishra's satire in "Interview". He addresses the interviewers as 'Eternal judges' who put riddles only to watch the candidate stressing on memory gasping for breath. There is a humour and irony when he says the applicant is waiting for Daniel's judgment.

He raises his voice for women too. He beautifully brings about the fact that marriage is a business and whatever may be the intelligence and education of the woman, like a commodity she is sold in the marriage market but here the seller has to pay a ransom to the bridegroom. This results in the loveless life: How can business transaction allow love to get some things sold and bought? The significance of a woman is dealt in the poem titled "Woman":

I am but born a woman since ages
'Becoming' is not in my fate
a tireless traveller against troubled times.
Mostly a giver at all times
sometimes a receiver though
of heat, hate and harshness.
I perform various roles though
cooking, cleaning and washing my forte,
fortified against man-made strictures.
A caged bird my only 'being'
I groan and grumble unheard
just to raise civilization after civilization. (1-12)

A girl child is received with suppressed joy and mixed sorrow. Though she opens the floodgates of happiness at her father's house, she is merely a price tag for the luxuries she carries along for in-laws. "She grieves in a corner like the fridge, sneezing/yet cooling everyone's whims" ("Lakshmi" 15-16). Here the poet depicts the pitiable condition of a woman in the society.

There is philosophical overtone in his poetry. Death is natural. It is part of life. Certainty of death is described by him beautifully: "Death is but a reality/ we all know yet evade". ("Penalty" 18-19) The sudden arrival of death puts a full stop to our worldly ties: "A single order annuls all worldly ties" ("A Superannuated Babu" 9). Mishra speaks about life's absurdity in this poem: "The perpetual wait never comes to an end" ("A Superannuated Babu" 15). This resembles Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* where the two characters - Vladmir and Estragon wait for Godot without any purpose but Godot never comes. The meaningless and nothingness of life is explained simply by the poet. Shakespeare says, "Life ... is a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/Signifying nothing." This is highly philosophical. Mishra's definition, "Life is but a game of snakes and ladders/we play at leisure jut for pleasure/mostly practising the freaks of fate." ("The Sandalwood Tree" 13-15) is very practical. It is human nature to question the ways of God. Even John Milton questions the ways of God in "On His Blindness". In "A Humble Prayer", it seems Mishra reminds God of His position to be beyond doubt and questions. He warns Him that He should grant peace and rest to those who follow the right karma and there by avoid people questioning His eternal ways. Mishra's genuine concern for humanity and his unshaken faith in the unbiased nature of God forces him to demand God to be above eternal questions raised by men.

Binod Mishra touches upon many contemporary issues in this collection. His poetry deals with loneliness, family life, generation gap, women, religion, philosophy, science, nature and God. He has some message for people of all ages. Poems like "Whatshapp" and "Block You" confirm his sound knowledge in technology, as he is associated with a prestigious institute of India. His concern for nature and ecology classifies him under post-modern poets. His language is simple and clear. The ideas

expressed in this collection are thought provoking and allow us to believe that Mishra plays with language and thereby conveys the heavy ideas in a simple manner. Simile and metaphor Mishra uses are taken from everyday life. Difficult ideas are conveyed with ease with his abundant stock of vocabulary. He is the poet for all ages. There is rhythm in his poetry. His human is subtle; at times he is satirical too. Like a Metaphysical poet John Donne, Mishra uses far-fetched words like permutation, netizens to drive home his ideas. His poetry is not just "a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" but a mixture of intellect and emotions. His response to various situations and experiences are poured out here. Mishra, as a poet, writes with social consciousness and has dealt with various issues of society. Certainly His *Multiple Waves* is a milestone in Indian English poetry as it touches multiple points in our senses and electrifies us. This collection of poems assures a significant place for the poet among contemporary Indian English poets.

