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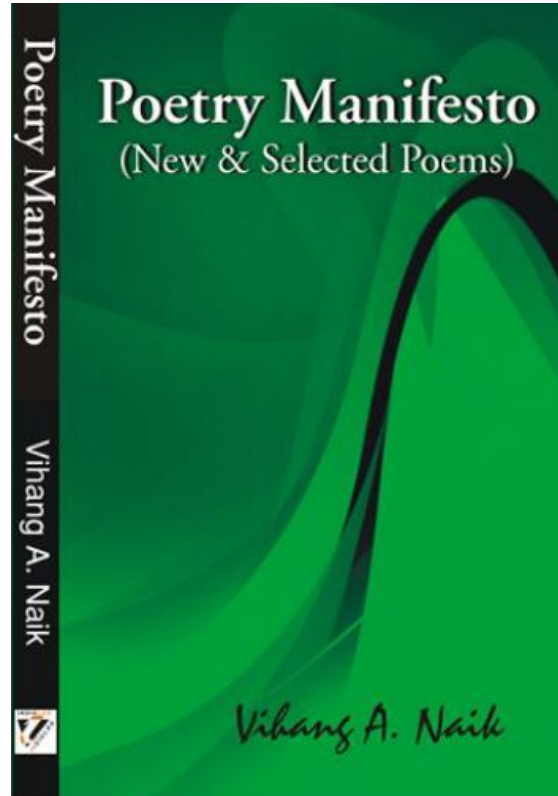
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## A PORTRAIT OF THE INDIAN ETHOS: VIHANG A NAIK'S *POETRY MANIFESTO* (NEW & SELECTED POEMS)

(A Review By)

*Handibag Yashwant*  
Head, Dept. of English  
Swami Ramanand Teerh College, Ambajogai,  
Dist. Beed, MS, India

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**Vihang A. Naik** was born in Surat, Gujarat on September 2, 1969. He is one of the contemporary poets writing in English. He has very beautifully and realistically depicted the various aspects of Indian ethos in his volume of poetry entitled *Poetry Manifesto (New & Selected Poems)* published by Indialog Publications Pvt. Ltd. in 2010. His portrayal of people, their mindset, the cities is very apt and he has a keen eye. He observes the things and catches the correct sensibility. He brings various images before the readers which itself is an illustrative to convey the meanings. His poems have appeared in literary journals and anthologies along with some significant e-publications. Four collections of his poetry have been published: '*Poetry Manifesto: New & Selected Poems*' (2010), '*Making A Poem*' (2004), '*City Times and Other Poems*' (1993). His Gujarati collection of poems entitled '*Jeevangeet*' (Gujarati Poems) published in 2001, has been dedicated to the cause of victims

of Gujarat Earthquake of January 26, 2001. He also translates poetry written in the Gujarati language into English, including his own Gujarati language poems. He had his primary schooling from Navrachna School in Baroda, Gujarat. He is educated from The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda with English Literature, Indian Literature in English Translation and Philosophy. He took teaching as a profession serving in colleges since 1996 in Gujarat. Presently, he lives and works in Gujarat.

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*Vihang A Naik's* poetry is postmodernist poetry. All the poems have issues which can be looked from the postmodernist point of view. He has divided his volume of poetry into different parts. The different parts have different topics or themes. The first part has 28 poems which have different subjects. In *The Banyan Tree*, he laments the loss of tradition which was rooted deep down into the soil and the tradition has been displaced by the modernity. He is very much worried about current situation in our country and his poet's heart feels sorry for what is going on in our society. In *A Day Begins*, he observes that man's day starts with reading news about accidents, bomb blasts, violence and mishaps. This continues every day. He calls this age 'an uncertain age'. In another poem he calls people who only speak and do not do anything as 'barking dogs'. He detests the tendency of modern man who is totally dependent on machines and whose life is governed by machines. In the 'e-age', there is no importance to any emotions and feelings of man. This tendency of dependence on machines is beautifully expressed in the poem *New Website*. He is very much aware of the situation in the country and very sympathetically writes about the famine and draught and people's suffering and their prayers. The pain and suffering of people who have lost their lives in the earthquake that took place in Gujarat in 2001 becomes the subject of a poem *Gujarat*. The encroachment of man over nature is another subject in the poem *Summer Hill Devdars*.

The second part is about the process of creation and the journey of a poet from his childhood phase to the adult person. It contains 25 poems. He writes about how his sensibilities have changed from time to time, how a poem takes birth, how it is a manifestation of feelings and emotions.

The poet's creativity is all about human beings—men and women on this earth. This creation remains permanent. The process of creation is not that easy. The theme, words, images and symbols always play a game of hide-and-seek with the artist. Expressing oneself is the most necessary thing and people choose different media to express themselves. Poetry is nothing but life itself with sorrows and pain on one hand and the happiness on the other.

Feelings, when appear on paper, a poem is generated and the man is soothed. The poet should tell the truth only without falling for any temptations. The poem *Making a Poem* neatly brings out as how the poem comes alive through pen in the form of words; throughout the life poet breathes by creating poems. Man is different from other animals as he is gifted with feelings, emotions which he can express. The poet expresses feelings through words and the poem is born. The words in the form of images which have taken shape with the help of ink make a poem. The poem is above everyday things. It's a creation of an extraordinary and imaginative mind. The process of creation is spontaneous; as soon as poet has some ideas, he should pen it down otherwise they would not come at later point of time. Creating a poem is like chasing a butterfly; it may or may not come to you; and though poet writes a poem, all the ideas wouldn't come on paper as they were in the poet's mind.

*A Reader's Response* is a poem which speaks of multiplicity of meanings while interpreting poems. We may find that we have got 'the' meaning but it is not 'the' meaning. There are many more like that and moreover it is a game which has no ending. The readers become confused while analyzing poems. The poetry also raises questions as regards creation, destruction, *moksha* and *mukti* and the poet and the readers too do not have answers for these questions. The poems make one restless with their 'subject' and 'tone' and sensitive minds cannot have sound sleep as these issues always

haunt their mind. The poet in his poem, *Are You Looking For That Poet?* observes that the poem has become realistic; it speaks of life 'as it is'. It doesn't idealize or romanticize the subjects. The poet is also a common man like everybody else.

As one enters in his young age from adolescent stage, he understands that life is nothing but misery, pain and suffering. The poem *At Seventeen* aptly brings out this feeling of the poet. The poet, in his naive stage composes verses which many times readers feel vague, blank and devoid of meaning. The poet feels that education doesn't make one wise. It gives only certificates. It's his inner voice which tells him what he wants to be. The poet is a sensitive person who becomes restless until he discharges his emotions through poems. The poetry makes poet imaginative, thoughtful, reflective person; through the poet's inward eye he wanders through different places and experiences many things.

The group of five poems entitled *Love Song of a Man's Journey* is about love and the feelings related to it. In poem 'V' the poet feels that memory of some incidents always remains with the person. Though the context changes, place changes, memory will always be there with the person; it will never change. In the same way, in poem 'VII' it is said that there is no use in thinking over the past; it is like a fossil or flower without colour and scent. Nothing positive will come out from the past.

The group of poems *At The Shore* has poems on various topics including poems on human feelings like desire and pleasure. In 'desire', the desire is compared to the octopus and said that desire for anything makes one restless. It makes one to lose peace of mind and it spreads its tentacles like octopus. The poem 'pleasure' describes that some things give pleasure at particular time; the same things may have given unhappiness at other times. We should think of pleasure and not the pain. It is said in the poem 'eyes' that reality never changes, one wish to admit it or not; it becomes vivid in daylight. The reality is always bitter.

The last group of poems entitled *City Times* is about the city life, sensibilities of people living in cities. The poem *A Broken Song*' depicts a picture of a poverty-stricken family. The houses, various things in it are symbols of poverty. The image of broken mirror signifies the context of the poem. The poem *After Innocence* shows the different stages of life. The childhood is innocent whereas the manhood has all the faults of human nature; people cheat and deceive and live with double standards. They are never genuine. Everybody thinks of selfish motives. The poem *On Visiting Grandfather's House* is nostalgic. The speaker goes to his grandfather every year in his vacation. Every time he sees that the city has been changed. His grandfather is a wise person. The house of grandfather is described in detail with all the details of various things in the house. The three poems, *Evening, City, Midnight City* are about city life and they describe city and different activities that go on in the city during the night. The poet describes the city and its life. It is full of noise and smoke and crowd. The images used in the poem indicate 'decay' and 'decline' of values. It is a centre of commerce and trade with its structure of cement concerts. A stranger awakes and questions the real and unreal. The city looks like a dry skeleton at midnight.



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