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## Reading *You I Could Hold*: A Versified Narrative of Love

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### Abstract:

The write-up titled “Reading *You I Could Hold*: A Versified Narrative of Love” is a critical analysis of the collection of English poetry *You I Could Hold* by the bilingual poet Dilip Naik who writes in Odia as well. While looking critically at the poems showcased in the volume, this undertaking has discerned love as the central motif of a vast majority of the poems. On the one hand, the number of poems centred on love is so big and the number of poems alien to love motif is so negligible on the other that it won't at all appear unwarranted to label the entire narrative as a versified narrative of love. The thrust of this critical reading is Naik's perception of love which is attributive of apotheosis. Chance being construed to be at the helm of whole affair, mortal human lovers have been conceived as mere abiding functionaries dancing to the tune of the divine dispenser. Composed in the permanence of melancholy, the tone of the love songs has been predominately mournful and their moods have oscillated between hymn and elegy.

**Keywords:** motif, love, apotheosis, idolatry, memory, grace, ethics, paradise and hymn.

*I seek refuge in your orphic grace*

*sing on*

*for what remains*

*is only a song*

*for what's gone.*

----- Dilip Naik

*you are the nocturne of a lifetime's mood*

*in the permanence of melancholy.*

.....Dilip Naik

*You I Could Hold* is a collection of eighty seven poems in English by Dilip Naik, a bilingual poet from Odisha, the east coastal state of Indian subcontinent. English apart, Naik writes poetry in his mother tongue Odia as well. Insofar as his poetic output in English is concerned, he has so far two volumes to his credit and *You I Could Hold* happens to be his debut collection published by the Authorspress, New Delhi in 2013. A vast majority of the poems of this collection tend to be love poems composed almost in a single memory. There lies at the epicentre of this singular memory the lady-love of the speaker. The lady-love has

remained the gravitational force as well as his central other. The poems of this collection seem to have been composed in the permanence of melancholy and the mode albeit ranges from hymns to elegy. In his famous autobiographical epic *The Prelude*, Wordsworth has written

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up  
Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear;  
Much favor'd in my birthplace, and no less  
In that beloved Vale to which, ere long,  
I was transplanted. . . .

Much in the manner of fostering of Wordsworth's poetic being, Naik's poetic sensibility seems to have been nurtured in a 'fair seed-time' in the past. But Naik's fair seed time of past tells the story of different action, of different length and avenue. The poetic persona is 'grateful' to 'god' for occurrence of such a memorable event with lifetime's efficacy. In the poem titled "To Be Left Behind" which figures in the volume under review, Naik has written

I'm grateful to the god who may not be there  
for giving my memory so beautiful an idolatry  
an alternative imagination of the improbable  
for bringing for some time someone so luminous  
that the thought smoulders throughout the leftover me (Naik, 2013, 94).

The making of Naik's creative sensibility is vitally linked to that 'someone so luminous' who has ever remained the object of his haunting memory, and has turned the cause of 'so beautiful an idolatry,' and it is her thought and image which have smouldered thought the persona's leftover life. How important that 'luminous' beloved has been to the poet, or rather to the persona, is clearly stated in the following lines of the poem titled "Are You Really Impossible."

That's how I live –  
myth-making picturing narrating you  
for you are the bread of my imagination  
you are all I do (2013, 22).

The luminous being thus has been the bread of the speaker's imagination. Rather the speaker has found the gravitational centre of his mind, body and being in the lady-love. In the poem titled "Only In Your Voice" he has reiterated

Only in your voice your eyes your face  
my heart finds its geometry  
outside the world in another place  
in a time unknown to history (48).

Settling in a mode of existence counter to the given scheme of time and space, the lady-love has posed to be out and out a transcendent being to the protagonist. She has turned at once 'an alternative imagination of the improbable' and has transposed herself to the mode of an existence akin to that of an immortal idol of divinity and from that position has induced in the

speaker the feeling of a beautiful idolatry. As a matter of fact, most of the poems of *You I Could Hold* have turned out to be splendid artifices of idolatry. The poet has accordingly and aptly labelled these pieces as ‘hymns’ which means ‘a song in praise of a god or hero’ in Greek (Cuddon, 1991, 434). The term ‘hymn,’ according to M.H. Abrams, ‘denotes a song that celebrates God or expresses religious feelings and is primarily intended to be sung as part of a religious service’ (Abrams, 1993, 84). The lady-love has turned, beyond any doubt, a goddess or deity to the speaker of these songs. The divine face of the lady-love looms large and hovers ever and anon in the lines of these songs. In a poem entitled “A Hymn” figured albeit in Naik’s second volume of English poems *By Inference* (2014), the poet has written

Deified in my secret senses  
 you remain  
 as time passes  
 but remains itself as time (34).

With her deified status and mode of existence, the lady-love has not been a human being for the speaker to share his ordinary banal life with security, comfort and health. Describing her trans-human or better, supra-human position the poet has stated in the third stanza of the poem

You can’t co-exist  
 with security, comfort, health.  
 You aren’t a negotiable point  
 in the honourable compromise  
 of living a normal life (34).

Attributes of her divine dimension have been further underlined in the next stanzas in the following manner.

You aren’t a body I can hold  
 in sweat and semen and tears.  
 The spectre of a beatific efflorescence.  
 A figure of fate.  
 You are more like the disclosure  
 of a different meaning of mystery (35).

The divine aura is more explicit and pointed in the last stanza which reads

Like a marble statue  
 you have no blood.  
 Like an idol  
 you can’t answer.  
 But you alone deserve my worship.  
 You who aren’t a means, a use  
 you who are nothing in the language of things,  
 pure as impossibility,  
 you are the beloved I can’t live with  
 or live without (35).

The lady-love thus embodies a deity, a divine being and a sacred idol of worship. The lover is her worshipping devotee and love a religious feeling, or a religious fervour. But such perception of love though transcends the bounds of time and space, does have a history too. It is linked to and founded upon one chance encounter with the beloved in the past in the early part of persona's life when he had hardly any idea about this feeling. Referring to that past moment, the poet has written in the poem "It Happened A Bit Too Early"

It happened a bit too early  
when we hardly knew what it was  
before the curse of knowledge substituted  
an idea for a feeling (53).

Though it happened too early and happened only for a short while, its impact was immensely important to the speaker. That short heavenly interaction has had a lifetime's effect on the persona. Giving hints about this happening, the poet writes in the same poem

Though just a little  
it was too much too soon  
for since then  
nothing like it has come to me  
or nothing like it I could go to (53).

About the nature of this rare happening and its impact, the speaker says in the intermediate stanza

a chance touch revealed a sky of song  
a turn of tone dramatized  
the possibilities of a promised time  
in a little gesture or just a smile (53).

As stated in the opening stanza, what the protagonist underwent in that past memorable moment was 'a feeling,' – a feeling of heavenly bliss. The last few lines of the poem offer more vivid accounts of this chance begotten occurrence with immortal efficacy. The speaker says

you turned me a ghost too soon  
emptied the world of your possible alike  
you stole away the will to renew  
and gave me the memory of paradise (53).

As a matter of fact, the trajectory of love this versified love narrative reveals has had three dimensions to it: (1) of pure feeling, (2) of an idea and (3) of its configuration or settlement at the habitation of words. Its contour is expressive of correspondingly a sensuous base, a psychic terrain and a verbal abode. Its flight starts with the runway of the body, meanders through the abstract realm of mind and imagination and ultimately lands in the immortal province of the lexicons. The progress is thus from its chance breakthrough in the instinct, prolonged fermentation in the mind and consciousness and final incarnation in the language game. Despite love's traversing through variegated plains and appearance in and invasion of

human body and mind, the human agency, according to Naik, has no sanction of and authority over it. He merely serves as a stage, or rather a medium of its revelation.

The recurring idioms of Naik's love songs idioms such as hymn, idolatry, deified, figure of fate, chance, god, paradise and worship, do subscribe to the idea that heavenly intervention is at the entire helm of the affair. Love as an affair comes within the jurisprudence of god, the divine dispenser. While humans have merely to undergo such a dispensation, they have actually neither any choice over nor any control on it. The plot of love narrative is, in other words, cryptically drafted in heaven by the heavenly authority. Human lovers' happiness or unhappiness, fortune or misfortune is only part of the divine machination on the matter. The persona of the love songs of *You I Could Hold* was fortunate to have a taste of this divine feast even though for an extremely short while. But this taste was so strong and intoxicating that he has never come out of its massive maddening effect. The chance honeymooning with the ladylove has remained paradisiac in nature and essence. The hangover of this brief spell of ecstatic life in the paradise has continued throughout his afterlife. The blissful spell has ended but it has left the lover with the 'memory of paradise.' The protagonist has adhesively held to that initial unforgettable ecstatic 'memory of paradise' throughout his remnant life. The beloved marks 'the figure of fate,' and 'a destiny of consciousness,' and the helpless lover cannot but supinely surrender to, or irredeemably stick to and languish over such an overpoweringly paradisiac moment and its invaluable, overwhelming revelation. The title of the collection is telling about such an adherence of lifetime duration on the part of the speaker to a fateful and fixated moment in the past. As a matter of fact, the collection's title constitutes an intermediary line of a short stanza of a poem by the 20<sup>th</sup> century German poet, Paul Celan and Naik has used the stanza as an epigraph to his collection. Celan's lines do in fact significantly initiate the tone as well as the motif of the songs of the collection. Celan's epigraphic lines are

You were my death:  
you I could hold  
when all fell away from me.

Death is undoubtedly the absolute, invincible and all-embracing figure of fate. It embodies destiny per se with absolute marks of inevitability and finality. Love to the persona, and in love, the beloved as well, appears as absolute as death. Here it is worth noting that love and death to Naik are 'equal' and they form a 'symmetry'- of violent nature and 'coherence' though. And both love and death bear in themselves stamps of absoluteness. In the third of a series of five sonnets on Nisus and Euryalus of Virgil's epic characters of *Aeneid* Naik has emphasised 'only death is as absolute as love.' In the last two stanzas of the same sonnet, he has gone on to write

The equality of death and love –  
the symmetry of a violent coherence –  
they had the fatal courage of sheer impulse,  
and death showed the power of their performance.

They are forever what they were for once,

erastes and eromenos – the eternity of a chance (Naik, 2014, 105).

The love songs of *You I Could Hold* in a sense celebrate this ‘eternity of a chance.’ True, the speaker of these songs has been turned to a ‘ghost’ following the withdrawal of the beloved, the chance begotten gift - withdrawn only after a brief enchanting spell. But the fond and fascinating memory of that chance encounter and ‘chance touch,’ was too profound and powerful to be obliterated from the mind’s eye. That chance touch of fleeting moments of past has brought him captivity for a term of lifetime duration. The speaker wonders at the strange, never ending power of that captivity, of that memory of paradise in the poem “How Could One Thing.” The opening stanza expresses this wonder in the following terms

How could one thing  
polish everything into a mirror  
reflecting your appearance  
as your absence? (2013, 88).

To Keats ‘Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard /Are sweeter.’ In the same manner, to the persona of Naik’s poem, appearance of the beloved through her physical presence was real and joyous but her appearance through her ‘absence’ was more real, appealing and more rejoicing. The joy she induced in him once was energising as well as engaging enough to make his journey go on for ever. The speaker asserts ‘You are the joy the oneness of which/makes the world go round, . . .’ He is heard saying a little earlier in the previous stanza

This waiting by the shore of the world  
this mooning over you that makes of all time an exiled evening  
this life conceived in pure memory,  
lays its claim, however vainly,  
on the promise of your presence (88).

In spite of the fact that the joy the lover got once in the company of the beloved was strong enough to make his world go its round, there is an inordinate desire in him to avail her physical presence over and over again afterwards in his life. The ladylove has been apotheosised and the desire has been accordingly transformed to a prayer while the lover has taken the position of a devout priest or the worshipper of love. The desire for the presence of the absent goddess of love takes various forms like an earnest appeal, a sincere prayer and a just or legitimate demand. The tone also changes accordingly from sanctity or sanctimony, through pity to stubborn assertion and often even of sarcasm. The poem “Come Again When I Want To See You,” for example, marks a solemn and sincere prayer or appeal made so to say, at the altar of the deity of love expressive of a fervent, sanctimonious tone. Apart from the opening line of the poem which marks its very title, the last two stanzas best exemplify this sincere and fervent desire on the part of the speaker. His appeal to the deified ladylove is

Come again when I’m ailing old  
and can hardly recognize you  
through the grey mucus of worn-out eyes  
I still would make out – it’s you.

Come again when I go up in flames  
outside the whorehouse called time,  
the sky would still be blue, the grass green,  
and you alone would be mine (2013, 84).

The poem “Want To Meet You” is also an explicit manifestation of an identical earnest desire for meeting the sweet heart on the part of the persona. It begins

Want to meet you  
at the edge of time where the light dreams  
of playing with shades of blue.

Want to meet you  
outside hope  
in a memory without anything to remember  
where just your name will do (2013, 70).

This desire to meet the absent beloved finds reiteration again in the last stanza which reads

Want to meet you  
after all the possible farewells  
where to look into your eyes  
looms the beginning forgotten by history (70).

The tone of the poem “What A Pitiabale Demand – Desire Me” is a mixed one exhibiting both fervent wish and self-pity or even subtle sarcasm. The title of the poem which marks the opening line of the poem and the concluding line as well are discernibly somewhat sarcastic in tone. The lines are ‘What a pitiable demand – desire me’ and ‘What a beautiful prayer to an absent-minded god – desire me.’ In the last three lines of the last but one stanza, the persona is seen in the posture of making a sincere prayer to this absent-minded god. The lines read

the arms outstretched in the gap  
between wanting and being wanted  
rust in the rain of the passing years (85).

When did the realization come upon the speaker and why and how it did that the ladylove is a heavenly being offered to him but only for once? This important realisation broke upon him right since the beginning on the occasion of her very first arrival at his doorstep. The poem titled “When You Came In The Light Blue Light” is a vivid account of this fateful arrival and its mesmerising effect of lifetime duration. This historic occurrence took place in one ‘early summer’ in the ‘quiet little town’ of the protagonist at a stage when he was hardly ‘at the edge of boyhood.’ Describing this all important arrival, the poet has written in the first stanza

When you came in the light blue light  
of the evening humming the beginning  
of what was to be a lifetime’s hymn  
to the desert sky of a dazzled thirst

that turned my bone to string (2013, 83).

As it is clear from this stanza, the very debut arrival of the elfin like beloved laid the foundation stone of a maddening relation the stuff of which turned the stuff of ‘a lifetime’s hymn.’ As regards the seminal significance of this rare happening, the third stanza depicts

I didn’t know then how it was named  
but sharp was the curve that turned  
a straight line into a throbbing arc –  
*the discovery of desire:*  
*your arrival* (Italic added, 83).

The all-important discovery, ‘the discovery of desire’ was made by the speaker. And ever since this discovery, the desire has turned to an inexhaustible stream of ‘combustion’ in the narrator and has set him ablaze and kept him ‘burning’ infinitely. The impassioned narrator has described this state of his lifetime burning in the following pulsating lines.

Since then you are burning me  
in the combustion that began in a fragrant smoke  
and through the years carboned my look  
wandering to find that different world  
which you,  
                  you who were for me everything for the first time,  
in a grace of silence affirmed (83).

That ‘different world’ to which the narrator was led by the angelic beloved by her affirmative ‘grace of silence’ was definitely the world of ‘paradise.’ However, now the paradise has been lost with that providential one time union of the lovers abruptly coming to an end. What now the love-lorn narrator is left with is only ‘the memory of paradise.’ The life of pure ‘feeling’ has been replaced with ‘the curse of knowledge.’ And since that moment of most sensational dramatic entry one fine and fateful summer evening and the soon after exit of the God-given gift, the narrator has been made to undergo ‘the curse of knowledge.’ Lord Buddha was right to pronounce that desire is the root cause of suffering. The narrator of Naik’s love narrative has been cursed to suffer irredeemably an unending anguish and misery since the very moment of departure of his heavenly beloved. The ladylove was indeed the very emblem as well as incarnation of desire to the narrator. More than that she was also an embodiment of hope, grace, promise and sacrament to the desire-thirsty lunatic lover. She has been described variously in various of Naik’s poems as ‘the gift of madness given for once,’ as ‘a lucid secret, a lyric chance,’ ‘a gift of loss,’ ‘a field of vision,’ ‘pulsating points of light,’ ‘a counter-gift to the given,’ ‘the reflections of untrammelled hope,’ ‘the spectre of a beatific efflorescence,’ ‘the disclosure/of a different meaning of mystery,’ and as ‘a soft terror.’ The praising words that Naik has used in describing Harel Skaat in his dedicatory poem of the collection may also be aptly applicable to the mesmerising ladylove. Here she has been eulogised in varying terms and expressions as ‘the depth of an aural sea,’ ‘the serenade of the ever evening,’ ‘the exalted octave of agony’ and ‘the balm soothing soft.’ In her the speaker has found precious intimations of ‘the boundless life of pure feeling.’ As

these admiring or rather, adoring words testify both Harel Skaat and the beloved of the narrator of Naik's versified narrative of love have a thing of beauty and therefore, a joy for ever. In this circumstance, it is no wonder, the promising beautiful face of the beloved has got eternally and unerasably imprinted in the inner eye and mind of the maddened lover. In ordinary situations, the speaker may sound somewhat hyperbolic in the following of his account about the facial gesture of his beloved. But she has remained an extremely uncommon a figure to him and that's why appears very much contrite in his expression. He says

That face  
 the promise of happiness,  
 those eyes to see is to dream  
 what can't be interpreted,  
 that smile an anamnesis  
 of a possible world  
                                   in unashamed tenderness,  
 that smell of sweat-crossed-cologne,  
 that nerve-stroking breath (2013, 82).

And with that powerfully eloquent face no more in sight in his real life situation, the mirror that is the narrator himself

looks for the image  
 in the darkness left behind  
 by the departed vision of that grace  
 which redeems the promise of time (82).

From a world of unnegotiable distance to which she has immigrated once and for all, in her august absence, her visage now appears to the mooning and mourning lover 'a photographed face,' 'a paralysed reflection,' 'a marble statue' 'a figure of fate' and 'an idol' with 'no blood.'

However, she has remained immortal in the realm of his mind as well as heart as the agency of his sacrament. She has been a ray of his hope in the dark and blind alley of his life. So much so, a decree of death from her would prove a gracious act to him. In the last stanza of the poem titled "How Could One Thing," he is heard saying

You who appear as your possible space  
 in the framed blackness of the world  
 remain in my heart like a secret sickness  
 to die of which would be an act of grace (88).

As a matter of fact, *You I Could Hold* has turned to be, as stated at the outset of this write-up, a maverick string of melancholic prayers and 'consecrating hymns' composed without any doubt, commemorating a single memory – the memory of the idolised ladylove – the memory which has been 'sadly endearing' and unfailingly rejuvenating. Most of the poems of the collection happen to be either an act of invocation of the goddess of love or rhapsodic

reminiscences of that rare ecstatic moment in the Eden garden of love. The beloved has remained so central and regulating a figure as well as a force to the narrator and she has pervaded so powerfully and unsparingly the entirety of his being that even when he is otherwise engaged in taking note of the given cyclic run of things and seasons, she has irresistibly intruded into his focal point to configure there in spectral form on the canvas of things. The following introductory and concluding stanzas of the poem “I Open My Eyes” best exemplify the fact.

I open my eyes  
and look at the space  
that was you (2013, 73).

And again

I close my eyes  
and feel the body  
that was you (73).

The image of the ladylove has evidentially pervaded the entire gamut of time and space insofar as the mode of existence of the narrator of the *You I Could Hold* is concerned. In this circumstance, the very meaning and purpose of his life have been linked to and centred on the graceful presence of her being. With the exit of the beloved, the lover stands excommunicated from the basic objective of his living. Deprived of love, he is left with ‘unassigned reason’ for his living. In the poem “What A Pitiable Demand – Desire Me,” the bereaved lover bemoans

a shadow that’s just been disqualified to be a body  
doesn’t know what to do  
with the unassigned reason  
for being itself (85).

In this deprived, disgraceful and decrepit state, the narrator becomes increasingly aware of the other ‘absolute’ figure, death to which he counts love’s ‘equivalence.’ In the opening stanza of the poem “Waiting Keenly Terrified Though I Am,” the speaker explains

Waiting keenly terrified though I am  
of his eventual arrival,  
its unpredictable inevitability  
teases the future tense  
in the grammar of my being (2013, 39).

Death consciousness has remained an important motif with the poems showcased in *You I Could Hold*. In many of Naik’s poems, not only of this collection alone but of its sequel *By Inference* (2014) as well, love and its equivalent death go hand in hand avowedly in violent coherence. Describing further his fearful state of waiting for death’s ‘unpredictable inevitability,’ the speaker says in the latter half of the afore cited poem

I live in dread of him  
though I live to be gathered by him –  
an acceptance? or merely a pathetic hope?

the embrace that never gets tired  
of its possessiveness –  
a necessary deception?

In this state of living with ‘unassigned reason’ and living ‘in dread’ of death, the only and apparently sensible thing he finds worth undertaking is playing, what he calls, ‘a language-game.’ The speaker is heard concluding the poem under reference

a language-game the heart must play  
while waiting for the last silence?

The poems Naik’s two volumes are strung with are truly the turn outs of this language-game. Like many other poets particularly the compatriot, Jayanta Mahapatra, Naik’s engagement in the language-game has turned to be a cathartic exercise. The following lines from his poem “It’s Almost Real” offer a glimpse to his poetic manoeuvre.

I’m an inward painter  
(the object isn’t given though)  
I imitate the feverish void of the interior distance  
between me and myself,  
where contours awake into figures,  
colours spill over as the light breaks  
and sounds wing their vibrations –  
a space is born (2013, 32).

A space is born in the process of mapping out the ‘the feverish void of the interior distance’ and there finds configuration a painting in words the contours and colours of which resonate with pulsating heartstrings. This is exactly what Naik’s verbal paintings are and do. They externalise stubborn and turbulent internal feelings, ‘feverish voids,’ ‘ultraviolet pain’ in most impassioned manner in ‘the subliminal tones of low time’ and in the permanence of melancholy. Moreover, there can be seen in the poetic space born distinct marks of ‘the buried years surfacing.’ Living in the exiled evening in constant dread of the unpredictable inevitability and living with unassigned reason, the protagonist has often held prayers to the idolised beloved with a view to attain sacrament through her grace. In the poem “Sing On,” for example, the persona prays to the absent beloved to sing on and pour soothing music on him ‘for it’s unbearable just to survive.’ Later on in the same poem he says ‘I seek refuge in your orphic grace.’ The voice of the beloved has served him as ‘the balm soothing soft.’ The persona fervently prays to his beloved to sing because, as he has put it in the poem “Only In Your Voice”

Listening to you is juvenescence  
which I have left far behind  
only in your voice my memory sings  
of absolute loss of a different kind (48).

The ‘absolute loss of a different kind’ that the narrator has suffered is indeed the paradise lost consequent upon the departure of the ladylove. In the absence of the elf-like beloved, the

deserted lover is wandering aimlessly in an evacuated paradise. Describing his miserable condition that he has been reduced to in the aftermath of that absolute loss, he says in the poem “Every Night”

I roam like the abandoned dog of a refugee  
in the deserted streets of a fallen city  
sniffing at the rubble to scratch a hint  
that all isn't lost after all (110).

In this pathetic condition another fragment of a prayer deserves citing. It is from the poem “Ghostscape” and it reads

Give me your salts and smells  
burn me in the fever of your mouth  
my throat aches for your spit, your sweat,  
and the honey of sea flowers your spasms spout.  
Gather me onto you  
as the palms lift the water to the lips –  
keep drinking me  
for I want to be  
at the same time  
both inside and outside you (2013, 68).

It is true that *You I Could Hold* has happened to be a pageant of beautiful hymns and prayers spelt out in commemoration of a departed lover or beloved. And Dilip Naik as a poet has emerged to be a powerful singer of love with this maverick collection of love songs. But it is also true that love is never the singular motif of the poems of the collection. Several other motifs of universal nature and significance, motifs like time, space, death and artistry have been entwined with the nucleus one i.e. love. Besides, the collection has been a fine manifestation of Naik's mythopoetic nature and tinge of imagination. Poems like “Yasoda,” “Chandrasena,” “Sabari,” and “Soumitri,” in addition to the series of five sonnets hold testimony to this fact. What is so common about these poems is all their characters are invariably oriental mythological characters and all of them are centred on the divine dimension of love. The sonnets of the series on the other hand owe their origin both in respect of character and motif to occidental classicist Virgil. The poetic idiom and ideas as well do powerfully point to mythopoeic traits of Naik's poetic sensibility.

Lastly, a splendid versified narrative of love apart, Naik's *You I Could Hold* has remained an immensely insightful and illuminating anthology shedding uncommon intellectual lights on the go of the world. In the side lines of grappling with the enigmatic contours and colours of love, the poet has side by side, endeavoured to hold mirror to the world around and at large as well, to see through it the underlying ‘motif in the given design.’ He has done so with a persistent eye on the central motif love and the central other the beloved who have been to him an exceptional endowment in life. When love has been the semantic termini of the syntax of his life, he finds his central axis at odd with the ‘motif in the given design.’ As he has put it in the poem “To Be Left Behind”

Some are sent to a monochrome life  
to figure out the consistency of the pattern,  
however brilliant the exceptional may be  
it isn't a motif in the given design (2013, 94).

The poem brings out the contrast between the motif of individuals, no matter how well it is intended and that of the consistent pattern of life in a closely knit given family set up. Again on the ways of the world, Naik's realization is

this is how things are  
this is the rule of law  
high above our most felt intensities  
irreducible to our most valued terms (13).

The persuasive conviction that ripples through poetic lines of the collection is 'we don't matter/for the meanings are quite different' (13). On the matter of love, 'our most felt intensities,' the poet is of the view that 'the supreme emotion/lives eventually . . . /in the gift of separation' (58). As regards human longing, the volume's thesis is 'longing can only wander/in an evacuated paradise,' and again, 'in longing one rediscovers love/as the infinity of a divine desolation' (58). Another important realization with the frustrated narrator has been that

failure casts a different light  
on things which success hides  
and rejection opens the heart beyond the self  
for acceptance is too banal a bribe (45).

If what Coleridge has observed on poetry as 'best words in best order,' is the defining parameter of poetry, the poems encompassed in the pages of *You I Could Hold* are without any doubt the best ones of their genre. Similarly if 'Our sweetest songs are those,' as Shelley has pointed out, 'that tell of saddest thought,' again Naik's songs appear undoubtedly the sweetest ones for they lay open before us the most melancholic musings of an extremely ruffled heart. Sprung up as the songs of the collection have from one most fecund and erudite mind and extremely impassioned heart, there's a plenty in the volume's pages for its readers to feast and relish.

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