

Book Review on Vivekanand Jha's *Falter & Fall* – A Poetry Anthology

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Falter and Fall is the title of one of the poems in this slim volume by Vivekanand Jha, dedicated to his former employer, the Indian Air Force. It can be construed, albeit wrongly, as 'pilot-talk' – make a mistake in the air and you have to crash-land. However, inspired by the epigraph – '*The world plots on, while poetry stumbles and falls*', attributed to poet Jayanta Mahapatra, this eponymous poem which is the 20th in the collection of 51, links back to the one Jha begins his book with. It may come across like an expression of disgust, bordering a bit on self-pity, but actually it is just something every aspiring poet would identify with (he or she may be going through exactly the same feelings at the time of reading), or every established poet would associate with his/her past. The struggle to get a toehold in the rocky and slippery ascent to the peak of achievement from the basecamp of dreams, is a known thing indeed.

There are 51 poems in this volume, randomly ordered, the guiding emotions behind the compositions oscillating from elation to despair, despondency to ecstasy and from dreamy optimism to realism. Poetry, not being bound by rules, I cannot of course say that there could have been a possible reordering of the poems. After all, the human mind never behaves in an orderly fashion, does it? Of course, the mind does struggle to find solutions and a via media leading to a mine wherefrom it could win some peace for itself – like one learns from some poems in the compilation, cleverly interspersed among the highs and the lows, the ‘bitters’ and the ‘sweets’. We have **Bhagavad Gita**, which the poet labels as the ‘jewel of divine wisdom’; **Hanuman**, who is found in ‘every heart and home’ (this is an excerpt from the Hanuman Chalisa, for those who know this Tulsidas composition by rote); and the **Seer’s Song** which begins thus: *Sing a song of glee even in hours of grief. (Mukesh’s ‘Gam jab sataye, seethi bajaana’ at once comes to mind).*

‘Global warming’, which yours sincerely teaches at university, is rich with imagery and metaphor, even though the poet, in the poem **‘Disposal’**, writes that God granted him the gift of ‘irony, pun and satire’. The impact may not be strong enough to convince the ilk of Donald Trump, but surely any lecturer can inspire his young students to think seriously about contributing to reshaping the world they would inherit from us. ‘Man to monster’ is why there is ‘Frost to ice’, ‘Water to blood’...anthropogenic climate change. There is a poem which laments meat-eating, as vegetarian animal-lovers

are wont to do, silently and helplessly – for that is the best way to lament. There is one which mocks at ‘non-conformism for the sake of non-conformism’. There is a third which came across to this reviewer as a reminder of the Hindi adage – ‘*pal mein pralay ho sakta hain*’ (*Apocalypse can occur about in a second*).

While there is no leitmotif as such, as written before, the range of feelings expressed in blank verse and rhyme, is a representation of the ups and downs, rights and wrongs, highs and lows, pains and pleasures, which are the inevitable opposites of human existence. Read, absorb and retain the take-home messages to chew on and pass on later to friends and acquaintances. You may not be able to remember all the messages conveyed by Jha in this volume, but at least remember the ones in the poem – **Disposal**, which is my favourite one. It tells you that the Biblical ‘*Ask and it shall be given to you (Luke 11:19)*’ is true indeed, but it is far better to believe that we ourselves do not know what is best for us, and therefore it is advisable to not ask for anything but just trust in the fact that God knows what each one of us must have, why, where, when and in what form. And we ought to try our best to prove the alliterative ‘*Our hands heave to harm and hamper, not to help and heal*’ wrong in our lives ahead.

Author's Bio



Vivekanand Jha, an Air Force veteran, is an Indian English poet, translator and editor. After serving Indian Air Force for twenty years he gave up his job to devote his time exclusively to writing. He divides his time between Darbhanga, Delhi and Gwalior.

He has a Diploma in Electronics and Communication Engineering, Certificate in Computer Hardware and Networking, MA and Ph. D in English. His poems and articles have featured in numerous journals and anthologies. He has authored one critical book on the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra and edited nine critical anthologies on Indian English Writing.

He is the founder and chief editor of two literary journals, *VerbalArt & Phenomenal Literature* published by Authorspress, New Delhi.

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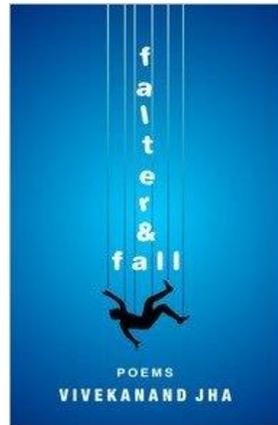
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5. ¹ Ibid.
6. ¹ Ibid.
7. ¹ Edgar Allan Poe, Review of Longfellow's Waif (parts I & II) (B), from the *Weekly Mirror*, January 25, 1845, pp. 250-251 <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/wm45lh01.htm>
8. ¹ Ibid.
9. ¹ Ibid.
10. ¹ Poe's first charge of plagiarism against Longfellow dates from five years before that, in Feb, 1840, before their first correspondence. Edgar Allan Poe, "Review of Voices of the Night" [Text-02], <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bgm40l01.htm>
11. quoted Rob Vellella, 10/3/2014 <http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-parlor-poet-vs-the-raven-in-a-battle-of-literary-statues>
12. ¹ The Edgar Allen Poe Society has helpfully made Poe's criticism, along with all of this writings, available digitally. See:
13. Imitation -- Plagiarism -- Mr. Poe's Reply to the Letter of Outis . . ." (March 8, 1845, text "A" — *Broadway Journal*) (Includes the reply of "Outis" from the *Evening Mirror*, March 1, 1845)
14. <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bj45lh03.htm>
15. [Text: Edgar Allan Poe, "A Continuation of the voluminous History of the Little Longfellow War," from the *Broadway Journal*, March 15, 1845.]
16. <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bj45lh04.htm>

17. [Text: Edgar Allan Poe, "More of the Voluminous History of the Little Longfellow War," from *Broadway Journal*,
18. Mr. Poe's Third Chapter of Reply to the Letter of Outis.
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26. ¹ [Imitation -- Plagiarism -- Mr. Poe's Reply to the Letter of Outis . . .](#)" (March 8, 1845, text "A" — *Broadway Journal*) (Includes the reply of "Outis" from the *Evening Mirror*, March 1, 1845),p.295. <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bj45lh03.htm>
27. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
28. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
29. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
30. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
31. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
32. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
33. ¹ [Ibid.](#)
34. ¹ "The Spanish Student" first appeared in installments in *Graham's Magazine* in 1842, during Poe's association with this publication, and 1843 was published in book form. (George Rice Carpenter, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*. The Beacon Biographies. Edited by M.A. DeWolfe Howe. Boston: Small, Maynard, and Company, 1901, p.73.)
35. ¹ Sandi Leonard, "Notes on Poe's Little Longfellow War," <https://plagiarist.wordpress.com/about/>
36. [Ms. Leonard compares the two poems Poe cited in his first charge of plagiarism against Longfellow](#), in his review, ["Review of Voices of the Night"](#) [Text-02], *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1840, pp. 100-103 <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bgm40l01.htm>, the same charge

which he recycled on March 29, 1845, accusing Longfellow's "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year" plagiarized Tennyson's "The Death of the Old Year."

37. [Imitation — Plagiarism — The conclusion of Mr. Poe's Reply to the Letter of Outis] (March 29, 1845, text "A" — *Broadway Journal*)

38. <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bj45lh06.htm>

39. ¹ Ibid.

40. ¹ Edgar Allan Poe, "A Continuation of the voluminous History of the Little Longfellow War," (March 15, 1845, text "A" — *Broadway Journal*) p.301, [p.303?].

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42. ¹ Ibid. Text: Edgar Allan Poe, "Imitation -- Plagiarism," from the *Broadway Journal*, March 29, 1845.] <http://www.eapoe.org/works/criticism/bj45lh06.htm> p.320

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50. ¹ Ibid.