

Songs of Sonority and Hope, "A Memento of Past Memories": A Critical Overview of DC Chambial's Poetry

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Abstract

Poets vary from one to the other in giving shapes to their imagination so that they let their feelings, ideas, observations, dreams, experiences, memories and so on known to the readers in their own ways. The poem is the result of both imagination and creation in sweet synthesis. It is like the lovely lotus coming out of mud and water. The lotus blooms and shines for the delight of the viewers sprouting from mud and water.

Keywords: DC Chambial, songs of hope, Indian literature, India poetry.

The idea that rises in the poet's mind initially is crude but shapes into a beautiful one in the poetic process like the caterpillar that is rough and rugged in the initial stage transforms into the pretty butterfly. It gets the due poetic shape. Spurting in the contact of an object or the experience in an incident or event, it lurks in the poet's mind in the form of memory, launches its journey in poetic or imaginative process and reaches its goal in the form of a message to the readers. The poem is, therefore, the ripe fruit of imaginative or poetic process in the poet's mind. The poetic process is natural in the mind of a poet like the tides that touch the shore to leave an indelible mark.

There dawned a poet with unique and distinctive qualities in the literary firmament to offer his prolific contributions to the world of readers. He is none other than Dr. D C Chambial, Ph. D. who has put in rich experience as a poet, critic and researcher for about four decades in the department of education and won several international and national awards for his contributions to literature and criticism. Several collections of poems gushed from his pen to draw the poetic attention of the readers in the contemporary era. *Songs of Sonority and Hope: A Collection of Poems* written between 2010 and 2017 is the latest piece to reflect his enormous achievement as a poet. It is resonantly beautiful for its 'sonority' and abundantly delightful for its 'hope' in the establishment of human concerns and cordial relations between man and man. It is his poetic objective as a man for man in the welfare of humanity and poet for his poetic sonority.

Chambial firmly believes in memory resulted in his experience of events and incidents got in sensory contact like T. S. Eliot, Nissim Ezekiel, Wordsworth, Robert Frost, Philip Larkin, and so on, who narrate their dreams, or memoirs or experiences related to the incidents, conveying all enlightening messages through their poems. In his preface (Poetry, Memory and Dream), he admits the fact: "the poet always banks upon his memory—personal as well as historical. As he gives shapes to his daydreams—that a poem can be best called—he cannot help stop his memory, making in-roads into his poem(s) ... this does not sprout from nowhere but it has its roots on one's memory ..." (7)

For Chambial, time fleets ceaselessly turning the future into the present and then into the past. The future that serves as a mystery turns into dreary present. In time's sojourn, the present turns into the past to serve as a history with memoirs, in the poem "Temple":

*Flag still flies,
waves and carries the past with it.
A memento of past memoirs. (17)*

And in "That Old Hil", he expresses the concept of the past to store memories:

*The gorge still exists
under the canopy of thick vegetation:
herbs, shrubs and trees
young again*

Past: a history. (19)

The past, in Chambial's poetry is eventful but not "forgotten boredom" (*The Less Deceived* 17) as viewed by Larkin. Its memories still cling in mind, establishing its continuity with the present that was once the future as seen from childhood. The past is, therefore, the fountain of memories in rise like the ripples to spurt in a flow. The past, the present and the future are interlinked and interrelated but not just mutually juxtaposed and slightly separated. The past lives in the present in the store of memories haunting and chasing the present ever as time past and time present are not separate,

Whenever

past

interferes with the present,

creates tsunamis. ("Wall-Hanging" 125)

Whether the past creates tears, "tsunamis" or smiles, on one's recollection in the present, depends on the experiences in life, but, it can never sever its link with the present. The past, therefore, exists in mind in the form of memories.

For Chambial, time: the past, the present, and the future, is an experience. In the passage of time, one finds the future with dreams to be a mystery, the present with happenings to be dreary and the past with memories to be a history. Time builds experiences in the form of

memories since life flows through time's course. He experiences time as life that is rooted in time.

DC Chambial profoundly feels and firmly believes that the poem dawns from memory in the process of both imagination and transformation in fusion to turn an idea that the poet gets initially to shape into a poem as it has "its roots in one's memory". The poem rises from "the memory of one's past life or lives, age or ages, which is termed as 'Historicity' or 'Tradition'" (7), as T.S Eliot calls it.

For T. S. Eliot, the eternal flow of time enlivens the past as memoirs. For Chambial, memories related to the past establish link with the present as it has its roots in one's memory. Both the poets believe in the sense of past to exist in the form of memories, histories or traditions.

The past is neither past nor dead for Chambial. Memories related to the past still lurk or cling in mind in the present. He does not feel that the past is past as it makes him recall "the past, a history". He is at the same time for the future. So, he eagerly waits for it since it comes with all hopes as the harbinger of good fortunes to fulfill his expectations.

For DC Chambial, memory is the source for a poem to bloom in eminence and spread its technical brilliance and artistic excellence. His concepts of the past and of the future are similar to that of Eliot:

You shall not think the past is finished

*Or 'the future before us' ('Dry Salvages' Four
Quartets 41)*

Like TS Eliot, DC Chambial believes in the endless flow of time that is the eternity of time as suggested by sun revolving, "the sun travels to west" (46). It is time to tick on like the hands in the clock that tick on. It flees. One need not notice its endless fleet. This view reflects Larkin's concept of time: "Whether or not we use it, it goes" (*Collected Poems* 152).

For Chambial, time is not an abstract idea but a moving force and governing factor. The universal fact of time's ceaseless flow, "Time ticks on" (46) is the nucleus theme of his poetry. This concept echoes Hans Meyerhoff's concept of time in *Time in Literature*, "We are conscious of every second ticking off" (6).

*Life sails in the river of time as life is rooted in the
endless passage of time. Time as the moving force
makes all move or flow in its course,*

In the river of time, flows the upshot

Of whatever falls in its windy current.

Nothing is static. ("Spark Survives" 140)

The concept of time in its inexorable flow is in Larkin's poem, "Days"

Days are where we live

They come, and wake us

Time and time over. (CP 67)

Like Larkin's concept of time, Chambial's is also evident in his other poems for its graphic depiction:

Time moves on

*Without any nemesis,
Without concern for any one
Like the sage
Detached and poised. ("Unanswered Questions"
112)*

*The sun had
Set in search
Of new sun.*

*Sun and shower
in chase since
Eternity. ("Chase" 25)*

The universal fact of time's eternity is that the day culminates into the night and the night, the day. The ceaseless flow of time brings about cyclic changes in days and nights. He writes:

*The morning sheen
seeped into
the dark of night. ("Butterflies in Wizened Skies" 33)*

The seasons befall cyclic as in Larkin: "Trees are coming into leaf". Leaves fall as a sign of their woes: "Their greenness is a kind of grief" (CP 166). In place of fallen leaves, there arise new leaves on the stems as the yearly trick of looking new.

In the endless passage of time, seasons change in the cyclic process as Chambial describes in the poem entitled 'The Sun Sings' (53). The seasons: summer, rains, autumn, winter and spring in picturesque portrayals are cyclic in nature in the rein of time in endless flow.

The concept of spiritual life and eternity recurs in Chambial's poetry. Birth culminates in Death and death initiates life, the stage of rebirth as the life in eternity,

Life and death

Complement each other

Like day and night,

Morn and eve,

... ..

Let's welcome both

With stoic stance of a seer! ("Stoic Stance" 110)

Chambial grows conscious of time and deals with it and its powers. He uses various images: sun, moon, buds, clouds, ocean, sea, water, sunlight, river, rainbow, trees, stars, wind and so on to suggest the incessant movement of time that brings about inevitable changes in life and nature.

Life is rooted in time. Time's movement is not measured but life is measured in time. Man's life finds the stages: birth, infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, middle age, old age ultimately to culminate in death. Life is, therefore, the yardstick of the stages of birth, growth and death.

Chambial joyously describes the child at birth that initiates life. Parents bring up their babies with all love. He puts it thus:

Parents rock us in cosy arms

*Sang sweetest lullabies for charms ("Live with
Winning Thunder" 59)*

As a poet and man, Chambial fondly loves childhood. He depicts it as "immaculate and innocent / a drop in itself" (56). For him, childhood is the stage of innocence. He beautifully compares the child to 'a drop of water' that 'weans solace and/ Soothes lips parched, /mouth and throat'. The comparison of a child with a water drop to give life to parched throats and lands is indeed apt and befitting,

Child's innocence:

*the home of paradise,
full of flowery fragrance.*

Soothing solace,

flowery fragrance,

restore ecstatic bliss! ("A Drop" 57)

Everyone loves childhood, as it is the stage enjoyable and preferable for recollection. Chambial is unique in the depiction of childhood. He excels other poets like the Hindi poet, Subhadra Kumari Chouhan in the description of childhood by her recalling it very often to enjoy its bliss

in "Mera Naya Bachpan": "*Baar baar aati hai mujhko
madhur yaad bachpan teri*"

Chambial deals with youth filled with verve and vigor, glory and glitz, liveliness and robust spirit, daring and dashing and so on. He feels that God is kind to grant youth to man. He exhorts the race of man to enjoy youth to the extent possible:

*We got our prize ordained by fate
Lived life lively, no cause for hate. ("Live with
Winning Thunder" 59)*

Youth is the stage to bestow on man sweet memories, as it is the choicest reward bestowed on man. It is Spring like youth in life to leave youthful memories for man in the words of John Keats,

*...lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span
He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honeyed cud of youthful thought he loves
("Human Seasons")*

Chambial also paints youth with the lovely colors of his love for youth that is robustly delightful and memorably beautiful:

*Glow: full of youth, verve,
Heat, full beautiful; apogee—
Simmers fierce beauty. ("Melee of Memories" 79)*

Man grows ultimately to culminate in death to mark the end of physical life. Chambial believes in spiritual life. From the spiritual point of view, life is with the stages: birth, growth, death and rebirth. In fact, like the law of inertia, life is also energy and it never dissipates; only changes shapes:

Death is sure for the born one;

Let it come while serving the torn men.

*Thus, he served Allah by serving his men. ("GMG:
The Man of Allah" 130)*

For Chambial, life that initiates the fate of birth culminates in death, turns into eternity in Time's flow,

Death is the fate of birth, dusk of the dawn,

Mirth slips into tears into tears, night, of the day.

Creation must end in destruction.

The wheel of Time goes on spinning anon.

... ..

A spark survives in the ashes that fly

*Urges recoiling souls to peaks beyond. ("Spark
Survives" 140)*

Chambial deviates from the concept of spiritual life, the rebirth of life, the immortality of life with the soul to merge with the other body when he comments on the transience of life, "Life is a nine day's wonder" in both the poems, "Live with Winning Thunder" (59) and 'Melee of Memories' (79). He advises man to "make hay while the

sun shines" (79). In "Live with Winning Thunder", he writes:

True, "Life is a nine day's wonder"

Live it, live with winning thunder! (59)

Chambial feels that life is not a bed of roses. He presents life to be the mixture of tears and smiles, ebbs and tides, ups and downs, pains and pleasures, hells and heavens and so on. He aptly deals with the truth of life:

Between

pain and laughter

lingers life silently. ("Pain and Laughter" 118)

The poet, Chambial refers to his belief in fate that governs life. It can make man suffer from, "A fatal stroke of fate:" in his poem "An Escapade"(20). Man, treading the wrong path in craze for the spell of money in his poem, "Man for Man", "Life's is not money/Money sustains life/ Life for Karma." (55)

The essence of love is the tone and tenor of Chambial's poetry. It reflects his love for life, love for man, love for woman, love for wife, love for nature, love for soldiers, love for motherland, love for God and so on. The focus and fulcrum of his poetry is love. He excels in the portrayal of love:

The life has been very kind to us,

Measured world to grow without fuss.

God has been so kind to grant this far last.

*Let's save it with sense: to our lot cast. ("Live with
Winning Thunder" 59)*

*Love, a sentiment of oneness:
comes unknown all at once.*

*Known to soul since eternity. ("Love Lasts
Eternity" 109)*

In the poem, "Woman Is a Woman", his love for woman is apparent when he says that man and woman are complementary to each other. He compliments woman for her "strength in her sinews/in her nerves." He extols woman for "She's to show the way/to the WORLD/once again, anew/ and lead the world of MAN/from this Hell/to Heaven. (120)

As a poet, Chambial adores God for His free offers like nature, youth, life and all others for the delight of man. He seeks the divine bliss,

*Seek solace at the feet of the Lord,
Not to let my mind any malice hold*

... ..

In such an ambience of cosy bliss,

*Let mundane senses kiss the divine bliss. ("Divine
Bliss" 94)*

The poet enjoys solace and peace in his meditation to God when he spells the most powerful mantra,

*Om! Om! Om!
since eternity.*

Solace! ("OM" 29)

For Chambial, life is the choicest gift and rarest dream bestowed on man for human life and love for humanity at large. He always wishes it to practice "values; human behaviour" (43).

Chambial's poetry is multisided and multifaceted as it marks a rich variety of themes. He, as a poet and man, loves nature like the Romantics as it offers solace to him. His contact with nature leaves indelible impressions and attractions, sweet memories and recollections on him. He wants to become one with the beauty of nature to be away from the stresses and strains of reality:

The tree beautiful

One has to care and love

To transcend tensions in peace. ("Harried Hurry" 63)

Moist air, Earth green

rife with music:

drip-drop, drip-drop.

Mellowed June air ("Simmering Song" 35)

Long to languish

in this bowl of Nature

and merge with it; ("Wingless" 30)

As a poet, Chambial loves the sights, sounds and scents and other sensuous gifts of nature. He loves to have

contact with nature for its beauty: charms, scent and
music for his gaiety.

Let's live by being closer

To descry

The beauties of nature

In upright stature ("Plunder the Thunder" 142)

The sweetest moment of life:

The star spangled sky. ("Sands of Oblivion" 97)

Sweet songs

stir the chords

of heart and mind. ("Wingless" 30)

The lovely music that soars with the waves:

Sinks to bed, rises to the face full in heat;

Lilts the loving hearts with the airy beat,

*With the symphony of its lovely staves. ("The
Symphony" 96)*

I went up the hill: the hillside

green, decked with multi-hued flowers

entice birds and butterflies all--

a gala of blush and sweet smell. ("Tales to Tell" 48)

For Chambial, nature is the gift offered by God to Man, His supreme creation, for his bliss. It is the heaven-like Eden for Adam and Eve for their paradise. It, therefore, plays the benevolent role for them. The poet gets engrossed in the beauty of nature to swim in the river of bliss:

*Look at
the green, smiling
leaf of a tree
... ..
I wept in happiness,
For His bounty: ("His Munificence" 136)*

*Looked deep
into the placid water
of noiselessly
flowing river. ("On the Bank" 137)*

*A sweet and beautiful birdie
Hit by the flowery arrows. ("The Bliss" 22)*

*The colours,
tint the Earth, Sky, Sea. ("Beauties of This World" 31)*

Chambial loves nature and the annual seasons. His descriptions of the seasons: summer, "the burning sun" in waiting for "Rain's mirth"; rains to "mollify" the earth;

autumn, "solemn in enchantment"; winter, "shivering chill", spring, "honeyed breath"; are vivid and picturesque. He adores and celebrates spring in his heart:

*Spring mellowed with honeyed-breath stirs life:
A celebration of colours all around;
Prickly chill left far behind in life's strife
To welcome the soft smooth breath that surrounds.
("The Sun Sings" 53)*

In nature descriptions, Chambial refers to numerous objects of nature: sun, moon, light, birds, trees, rivers, oceans, hills, flowers, showers, stars, myna, cuckoos, seasons and so on like Wordsworth.

Chambial is a keen observer but not a silent spectator of the society today. In his observation, he finds full of evils in the society against his wishes. He has memorable experiences got in his keen observation of society. He expects man to have social virtues and human values but he does not find any as per his wish. He shares all his feelings to the readers and so that they feel for them equally in his spirit. As a poet and man, he feels profoundly sorry for the evils:

*Heart is heavy
to recount and remember
the lapses made
undeserved and uncalled for. ("Remorse" 41)
Man has meddled not with morals only,
Dug deep into the bowls of Earth as well;*

Has made vulnerable Earth, life, a hell,

*In his blind quest for Mammon selfishly. ("Man for
Mammon" 45)*

A poet without responding to social evils and ills, trivialities and frivolities, injustices and irregularities, inequalities and immoralities, vices and prejudices and so on is not a poet in true sense. Chambial is a poet whose heart aches for all social evils. He, as a poet of social consciousness and moral awareness responds to all those failings and reacts by his vehement protest against all those in the welfare of the society he lives.

The poet finds in his land sans ethics, values and virtues in the poem, "We Are Living". Instead, he finds in the land debauchery, larceny, treachery" as "the order of the day" against his wish to find "love and compassion". He hates the plight in the land,

We're living in a land

that abounds in

wolves, hyenas and jackals; (51)

In the contemporary society, man has grown over selfish to have material matters. In the poem, "Man Prefers Matter", he opines, "Men prefer matter" in "changed values". The man today wants to become rich overnight "By fair or foul means" (43) without minding any loss and deception to any fellowman as he feels that money is the source for all his pleasures and luxuries. It is the means for him to solve all problems in the reach of his goal.

*Money is the sole subject
and for that
they cast lots to decide
who wins this time. ("Woman in Kitty" 39)*

*The riches sought in this lusty world,
Overnight one longs to pluck the brightest star;
("This Lascivious World" 44)*

In fact, God created man with His message to him to have human concern and cordial relation for man, man-for-man relation, man's amelioration but he goes against the Divine will by craving for material possessions and irregular earnings.

*By fair or foul means, one wants to be rich
In no time. One seeks all troves of Solomon,
Connives for this even with demon. ("Man Prefers
Matter" 43)*

Apart from foul ways of owning money, the poet criticises man's longing over power in the poem, "The Canyons of Time": "Every hungry for power, can stoop to any depth."(133) He detests all prejudices in "Heaven on this Earth" calling all the evils "The devils/Ego, desire, greed." (81)

Man has transformed the paradise-like earth into a hell against the aims and objectives of an ideal society. He cannot replace the hell-like with the paradise-like on earth. Man lost the paradise due to his failings. He has to regain

it by means of his virtues and values. It is not possible for him to reestablish values and virtues, as he is heartless: "Love is lost in human heart," ("There Was a Man" 67).

As man and poet, Chambial loves to live and write in man's enlightenment in quest of bliss in life. He wishes the world to be peaceful and the people should enjoy peace as in paradise, doing good for the humanity at large:

*The world is too good a place
Where all of us --the human beings
Should live as His happy and sanguine souls
Removing the thorns on the ways,
Make them play with rivers of their tears.*

*Let's join hands in a chain
In the world to scatter the pollen of chagrin
And usher for all into a new Heaven of happiness.
("Heaven of Happiness" 132)*

Chambial feels that life is a boon bestowed on man to live and enjoy. It is heavenly: the earth is a heaven for man,

*The life has been very kind to us,
Measured world to grow without fuss.
God's been so kind to grant this far last.
Let's save with sense: to our lot cast. ("Live
with Winning Thunder 59)*

Like great patriots, Chambial feels that our country is indisputably great as he has love for his nation. Here the poet's tone is satirical. He never wishes the people of his nation to be violent. Hence, he never wishes the end of life due to violence or killing on the borders in a battle. His patriotic fervor is apparent when he, with all regrets, refers to the killing of soldiers on the borders. He hates violence in the form of murders, rapes and other brutal acts,

Men are killed on the borders,

Women become widows,

Mother's laps empty, eyes flooded to tears.

*Children without canopy to face the blizzard. ("The
Canyons of Time" 133)*

*The valiant soldiers ever awake on the distant
borders:*

They are men, who stand for truth and suffer long,

Picketing against enemies and charlatan hoarders,

*They are the men: merit honour, make the land
strong.*

("The Wounds of Deceit" 146)

Politicians make promises assuring the people of their honest rule for the welfare of the people, especially the peasant community but fail to do so to prove that they are responsible for the decline of values and the downfall of

their nation. They prove to be traitors, cheats, villains and so on in the mission of coming up overnight:

*They are the real villains who become ignorant too
'East or west, home is the best': the true balming
hand.*

("The Wounds of Deceit" 146)

Exploitation, coercion and all other evil practices in the society surpass the limits to result in total devastation. The poet expresses his anguish for the horrendous situation by the use of symbolic images: fire and wind:

*The wind turns into gale. The fire—wild fire
when they join hands and move in the valleys,
on the hills and mountains. These dances
devastation. Revolution result ("Song of Sonority
and Hope" 147)*

When man has forgotten humanity, the love for his race, the poet feels that the restoration of justice is the only alternative to stop violence and bloodshed:

*When exploitation and coercion
cross the bounds of humane humanity,
it becomes must for Nature
to restore the natural justice. ("Songs of Sonority
and Hope" 147)*

As a lover of humanity, Chambial touches all aspects of social relations with human concerns especially familial and conjugal relations. Wife and husband are essential for

the welfare of a family in the way the wings are essential for a bird for its safe flight. He refers wife and husband as the two wings essential for life. The family has to develop into a good society to enjoy man's harmonious existence,

Life isn't a one-winged bird:

It needs two to fly,

To rise to the sky,

To go past the hills and canyons

To taste the pleasures that lie beyond. ("Plunder the Thunder" 142)

The poet, as a humanist, loves his fellowmen and wishes their welfare. He professes the sense of hope and faith for a welcome change. In the light of optimism, there are the new sunrise to shatter the thick pall of darkness and the clear way to evade ignorance resulting from selfishness and greediness for terrestrial possessions. One finds light deathless to lead all to prove worthy of true human beings,

There is one light bright

beyond the hill,

in the dark, full of lilt

the perpetual home sans guilt

that all crave to own;

the highest good, life's crown. ("Beyond the Yonder Hill" 49)

The Earth, created for Adam's chastisement,

Can be easily transformed into Heaven

If those living here below the firmament

*Follow His commands in this haven. ("Our Conduct"
96)*

Chambial marvels at the achievements of men in making the existence of society safe and happy. This soft corner for man is the clear sign of his love for fellowmen and motherland:

I marvel at their acumen and sound

Daring who make every effort and sweat

To raze the mansion thoughtlessly to ground

*That gives them their life's comforts as life's treat.
("I Marvel" 148)*

Chambial deals with time and its powers, the past as a history in the form of memories and contemporary society. He sets a model to the poets of younger generation by lashing and criticizing the social evils with all hopes on the man's transformation into an ideal one. The poet teaches all ideals and principles for man's harmonious existence.

Chambial establishes as a poet of high accomplishment in the galaxy of English poets in the contemporary era. Credit goes to him for his poetic merit. His poetry is so profound that the reader has to read between the lines to know his thematic beauty in plenty. Through his poetic prism, he presents the kaleidoscopic variety of themes. It is thought provoking and soul stirring by virtue of

thematic affluence and artistic excellence. By means of his employment of poetic devices like images, similes, metaphors and personifications in *Songs of Sonority and Hope*, the collection of poems: 2010-2017, he presents the snapshot details of all the poetic scenes to the readers. The title is so appropriate that we, as readers, enjoy in the bunch of poems the sonority of rhythmic beauty and the poetic vision to reflect his hope in promoting values in the man of the contemporary socio-political scenario.

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