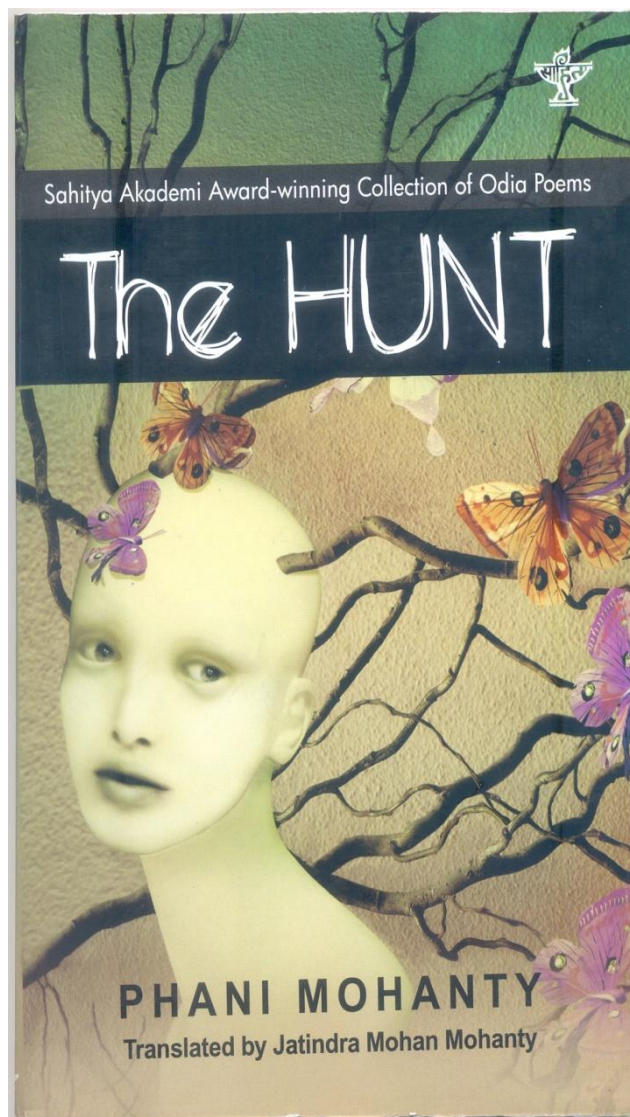


Book Review Section



The Hunt

(Sahitya Akademi Award-winning Collection of Odia Poems)

Poet: Dr. Phani Pohanty

Publisher: Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi

Page: 97

Price: Rs. 110

Reviewer: Chittaranjan Bhoi

Translation is an important form of literary art which connotes the art of recomposing a text in another language without losing its original sense and flavor. Further, translating a classic or a master piece determines the command of the translator on the source language that the text belongs and the language to which it gets translated. Knowledge of language simply does not make any difference unless the translator possess adequate knowledge and understanding of both the cultures, traditions, edemas, phrase, folklore, custom and so on. It goes without saying that translated text is a creation within creation.

The Hunt is one such work of art translated by Prof. J.N. Mohanty. The anthology is comprised of twenty seven poems. Three of the poems such as 'Hunt', 'Guest' and 'Characterless' are long poems. This collection has received much coveted Central Sahitya Academic Award. The original award-winning Odia poetry collection entitled *Mrugaya* is a masterpiece of Dr. Phani Mohanty, an erudite professor of philosophy, an able administrator, an orator per excellence and above all an unpretentious man. Mohanty has curved his way towards poetry at the very young age. Since his college career he has been emotionally attached to poetry which turned into an intoxicated gesture later. As a matter of fact he has never looked back. Indeed, the intensity of Mohanty's collection not only makes the readers spell bound but also tempts them to realize and personalize the context. Mohanty has more than two dozens of poetry collections to his credit.

The Hunt is a valuable contribution to the repertoire of English translation. What is fascinating about Mohanty's poetry is that it flows uninhibitedly with scant regard for the trappings of the technicalities of the craft and without any 'palpable design' (Keats) and conscious artistry. This lends a radical charm to his poetry.

These digressions, however important, shouldn't divert us from the pith and core of Mohanty's real poetic agenda i.e. love and humanity. The transit of the poetic persona from earlier poetic sensibility to a newer poetic expression is worth admiring. His piercing ability to introspect and elevate the self is perhaps the stunning trait that oozes out in Mohanty's electric collection of verse. What is more significant is that Mohanty does not make any secret of his indebtedness and fuses them so casually and successfully into his creative craft that it leaves not even an iota of 'the anxiety of influence'. Mohanty alludes to Indian mythologies like *The Ramayan*, *The Mohabharata* which shows his range of study and self internalization. The powerful imagery borrowed from Indian mythology and modernity exhibit the grandeur of his poetry. The dialects, idioms, phrases and the figures of speeches are aptly chosen by the poet.

Mohanty is a self-driven man who speaks truth candidly and forthright. His readiness to confront the challenges of life is evident in his poems. He who mocks at fear at a distance and affirms:

Fear is a simple occasional obsession.
For a man half-alive.
It has no specific figure for such a man,
Only a dependable strategy to be alive –
A fine alibi. (Who to Fear, 8)

In Frostian vein the poet makes his journey into the forest in his signature poem, “The Hunt” and appreciates the beauty of nature. As Ramachandra went out into the forest to hunt the golden deer (an illusion) during his captivity in forest, similarly the poet’s voyage to search for an imaginary paragonian beauty in the woods was an illusion. The passion to submerge in her splendor and shine, the poet murmurs:

I am sure before the hunting is over
I will see you, may be once, somewhere,
Without seeing you
Without talking to you one or two words at the end,
Can I ever leave the place so easily? (The Hunt, 62)

Most of the poems of Mohanty are full of questions of variety. Who is that painter...? in “Where are You?”; Who is that Villain...? in “Villain” ; Whose clothes? Who is stealing? in “Stealing of Clothes” are the specimen of interrogation. Indeed, he has not simply left the questions unanswered yet, he has given all probable answers too. The inclusion of mythological characters like Kumbhakarna, Belalsen, Draupadi, Laba, Kusa and Durvasha shows the poet’s profundity of knowledge.

It would be a blasphemy if the artistry and maturity of the translator is not recognized. The translator is able to transmit the sentiment and emotion of the poet quite well. The archaic style of the translator is praiseworthy. The words chosen by the poet and rendered by the translator are appropriate, lucid and hurt touching. I enjoyed reading the collection and hope it will get readers’ approbation.