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Heidegger on Poetry: What is Sudeep Sen for?

SUMMARY: Cross-reading of works by contemporary Indian English poet Sudeep Sen and German philosopher Martin Heidegger highlights some unexpected themes and parallels of both authors' world-views. Somewhat poetical and often drawing on allusions, the analysis is inspired by the approach on new historicism and its founder, Stephan Greenblatt. Sen and Heidegger, both praised for their attention towards language and beyond, share discoveries regarding existence in destitute time, suspicion about science and technologies, and finding of traces that could lead let the man back to gods.

KEYWORDS: poetry, new historicism, Sudeep Sen, Martin Heidegger, Being, nature, philosophy.

One of Martin Heidegger's essays is titled *What are poets for?* Written in 1947, it explores the German Romanticist poetry of Reiner Maria Rilke (1875–1926) and Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), in many ways illustrating Heidegger's own philosophy. Heidegger, highly aware of the determination and limitations of Western metaphysics, saw poetry as one of the ways leading back to the original purpose of philosophy—speaking about Being and origins. Beside philosophical enquiries Heidegger uses poetical expression to characterize how poetry and philosophy are related to thinking, expressing it in his own poem:

Three dangers threaten thinking.
 The good and thus wholesome
 danger is the nighness of the singing
 poet.

The evil and thus keenest danger is
 thinking itself. It must think
 against itself, which it can only
 seldom do.

The bad and thus muddled danger
 is philosophizing.¹

(Heidegger 1975: 8)

This poem is the first step towards answering the question given in the title of this article, or at least clarifying what the German thinker has to do with a contemporary Indian poet. Sudeep Sen (b. 1964) is one of the most internationally recognized contemporary English-language poets and his works have received multiple international awards and are translated into more than twenty-five languages. Besides collections of poems and various publications in leading English-language off-line and on-line media, the poet's oeuvre also includes photography and graphic artwork, edited volumes, translations and short films. Sen was the first Asian invited to participate in the 2013 Nobel Laureate Week, where he delivered the Derek Walcott Lecture and read his own poetry. While establishing his place on the international literary scene since the late 1980s, the poet studied at St Columba's School in New Delhi and read English Literature for an honours degree at the University of Delhi. In his own words: "I am a transnational writer with

¹ Drei Gefahren drohen dem Denken.

Die gute und darum heilsame Gefahr ist die Nachbarschaft des singenden Dichters.

Die böse und darum schärfste Gefahr ist das Denken selber. Es muß gegen sich selbst denken, was es nur selten vermag.

Die schlechte und darum wirre Gefahr ist das Philosophieren.
 (Heidegger 1954: 13)

New Delhi, London and New York being my significant anchors. My writing is influenced by Indian, European and American traditions, both classical and modern. I am particularly interested in prosody, in creating new forms and experimenting with innovative structures. I enjoy and find extremely stimulating, the engagement with cross-arts, especially collaborative work with artists, musicians, dancers, actors, film-makers, photographers, designers, architects and scientists.”²

Sudeep Sen’s dual or even nomadic identity naturally encourages post-colonial reading and interpretation of his works, looking into obvious matters of global cultural identities and their relationship to languages and artistic practices. However, in this article I choose somewhat experimental reading inspired by cultural poetry of new historicism, particularly its variation represented by Stephan Greenblatt. Leaving in the background but keeping in mind the methodological steps of the new historicism proposed by Michel Payne (Payne 2005: 3), in the analysis of Sudeep Sen’s poetry I rather choose practising (for cultural poetry is more like a practice than a strict method) diachronic reading of two sets of texts, as it was done by Greenblatt himself. The latter finds telling similarities, juxtapositions and hidden lacunas of meaning in a joint analysis of such texts as *Jew of Malta* (1589) by Christopher Marlowe and *On the Jewish Question* (1843) by Karl Marx, or the ethnographic collection *Scatological Rites of All Nations* (1891) by John G. Bourke and political fiction *Utopia* (1516) by Thomas More. Here the semi-otic and rhetoric differences of texts concerning seemingly similar subject matters highlight particularities that could not be seen if such texts were analysed separately or in their historical contexts. Similarly, this article offers attentive reading of some of the most recognized Sudeep Sen’s poems and writings, both philosophical and poetical, by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the (in)famous

² This “author’s statement” is taken from: <http://literature.britishcouncil.org/sudeep-sen>.

German philosopher. Both authors were concerned with Being and language, and both of them wrote in milieus so close temporarily and so far contextually. At the same time they are tied together with Indo-European forms of thinking. Sometimes it seems that Sudeep Sen uses themes and tropes of German Romanticism poets praised by Heidegger, and the latter sometimes seems seeking the ultimate grounds of being in a place where Western metaphysics meets Vedic religion. At the end of the day, “part of the pleasure of cultural poetics is to become aware of the hidden transfers between apparently discontinuous or even opposed spheres” (Greenblatt 2007: xiv). Both writers share certain attitudes, motives and images. Cross-reading of their works enriches understanding of the authors’ relation to poetical creativity and, more generally, raises a question about the contemporary application of Heidegger’s thoughts. The fact that both authors use the same tropes of technological world-view, light and night, possibility of real poetry etc., provides a powerful interpretive link between unique projects of German philosophy and Indian English poetry. Despite the obvious differences this shared reference is not an accident or a mirage. Sudeep Sen’s intellectual and biographical connections to the Western world and Heidegger’s interest in the origins of Western (in historical perspective it should be Indo-European) thought creates a pregnant disposition for similarities in reflection facing the crisis of the modern individual characteristic of the 20th century.

The nature of darkness

One of the contemporary receptions of Heideggerian philosophy takes place within the discourse of eco-criticism. Kate Rigby points out that “What are poets for?” is also the title of the last chapter of Jonathan Bate’s book *The Song of the Earth* (2000), that is, in her opinion, without doubt the most important work of eco-criticism published in Britain to date (Rigby 2001:1). The eco-critical discourse claims that “Our times, too, are times of need: haunted by the unacknowledged evils of the recent past, racked by intractable wrongs in the present, and facing the prospect that, in the not too distant future, the very earth that

sustains us will become unlivable” (*ibid.*). Rigby and Bate illustrate the ecological importance of literary works, especially poetry, in restoring the proper relationship between man and nature. I doubt that Heidegger would totally agree with such a statement on poetry’s instrumental role; still, critical reflection of certain scientific developments is common to the German thinker and Sudeep Sen. This is also one of the paths that may lead a little bit closer to answering the titular question.

The title of Heidegger’s analysis of time, language and poetry is a reference to the German poet Hölderlin’s verse “and what are poets for in a destitute time?”³ Indeed, the notion of destitute time is a bridge that connects the metaphysical world of German romantic poetry with life in the 20th century. As a closer look will show, the time has not changed, it is still destitute or—referring to the Hindu lore—it is Kali Yuga, the last of the four stages that the world goes through as part of the cycle of yugas. However, a slight difference can be observed regarding the beginning of the end of time: while according to the *Surya Siddhanta*—an astronomical treatise that forms the basis of all Hindu and Buddhist calendars—Kali Yuga began at midnight on 18 February, 3102 BCE, for Hölderlin the end of the day of gods is marked by the appearance and sacrificial death of Christ, which followed the absence of Heracles and Dionysus. The absence of God comes with the extinguishment of divine radiance in the world’s history.

The time of the world’s night is the destitute time, because it becomes ever more destitute. It has already grown so destitute, it can no longer discern the default of God as a default⁴ (Heidegger 1975: 91).

Divine radiance refers to light more than just metaphorically. While comparative culture studies would claim that the light is one

³ “...und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?” Although Heidegger’s term *dürftiger Zeit* sometimes has been translated as ‘times of need’, I prefer ‘destitute time’ coined by Albert Hofstadter in the first “What are poets for?” English translation.

⁴ “Die Zeit der Weltnacht ist die dürftige Zeit, weil sie immer dürftiger wird. Sie ist bereits so dürftig geworden, daß sie nicht mehr vermag, den Fehl Gottes als Fehl zu merken” (Heidegger 1977: 269).

of the basic elements of creation stories in world religions and the sun is almost always seen as one of the major divinities, divine radiance as light must be seen here in relation to Being (German *das Sein*) and truth that is inseparably connected to being in the world. God has to be called in the darkness of existence:

Outside, “Allah-u-Akber”
 Pierces the dawn air —
 It is still dark.
 (“Prayer Call: Heat”)

It is still dark; nonetheless, existence tied by embodiment, suffering of heat, and twists of desire bounds light in the darkness. Dance is the language that speaks beyond words; therefore dance as a language can bind the light that reveals truth—clear, poetic, passionate and ice-pure.

But it is this sacred darkness that endures,
 melting light with desire, desire that simmers
 and sparks the radiance of your
 quiet femininity, as the female dancer
 now illuminates everything visible: clear,
 poetic, passionate, and ice-pure.
 (“Bharatanatyam Dancer”)

Still seizing the light by embodiment is insufficient for total presence, being here-and-now. The physical body only provides a means of articulation—the language is spoken by it, but it is not the language itself. Paradoxically, there are no languages without speaking, hearing or writing, at the same time the very act of articulation alienates Being from the language. As thousands of other thinkers and poets Sudeep Sen finds agency of being somewhere else than in embodiment and this agency is the human soul. Verses from the poem “Flying Home” contribute to this distinction:

One, one that gently reminds and stalls
 to confirm: my body is the step-son of my soul.

However, what is this distinction worth “in this day and age”, when it is done so many times before? Soul and skin are ephemeral things

exactly because their distinction is ephemeral. The destitute time is also St. Augustine's fleeting time of speaking; the eternity and eternal return are lost, the words syllable by syllable are spoken and they return from where they are cast. This day and age is not the day and age of being, the orbit of sacredness has been changed to linear sequence of worldly night; therefore, things can be said many times, any distinctions—like the one of skin and soul—are not the ritual repetition of the same, it is powerless re-saying of the same concept, lacking identity to the previous saying. "This day and age" is exactly "this"—it has not existed before "this" and it will not exist after "this".

But what talk of soul and skin
in this day and age, such ephemeral things
("Flying Home")

Still the language itself can reveal an abyss of absence when the night is the darkest. As Heidegger puts it: "Mortal, when we think of their nature, remain closer to that absence because they are touched by presence, the ancient name of Being. But because presence conceals itself at the same time, it is itself already absence"⁵ (Heidegger 1975: 93). In these desperate times a poet is the one that walks in disappearing footsteps of already disappeared presence—it is the sensitivity to language that holds potentiality of en-lightening things—the potentiality to reveal truth that is Being. While April is the cruellest month of the year, December is definitely the darkest:

One moonlit December night
you came knocking at my door,
I took my time to open.
When I did,
there was just a silk scarf,
frayed, half-stuck in the latch.
("One Moonlit December Night")

⁵ "Sie bleiben, wenn wir ihr Wesen denken, dem Abwesen näher, weil sie vom Anwesen, wie von altersher das Sein heißt, angegangen sind. Weil aber das Anwesen sich zugleich verbirgt, ist es schon selbst das Abwesen" (Heidegger 1977: 271).

Although the moon shines in the darkness, its light is cold and poor for it is only a reflection of the sun. This, perhaps, is even more tragic than being in the darkest night—wandering under the moonlit sky, in light without warmth. The secondary nature of moonlight only emphasizes its un-reality and our absence from Being. Moon and moonlight are constant motives in Sudeep Sen's poems, for example opening and closing the "Remembering Hiroshima Tonight":

It is full moon in August:
the origami garlands surrounding the park
(...)

Tonight, real flowers are blooming
in the ancient Japanese moonlight.

The shadow of modernity

The significance of Hiroshima in both Heidegger's and Sudeep Sen's thinking will be outlined below, primary is the answer to another question: where can we find the traces of God in the darkest night? Heidegger here points to Dionysus (although the title of Hölderlin's elegy is "Bread and Wine", referring to the Last supper in the New Testament, Christ for Heidegger is not separable from two other Greats: Heracles and Dionysus). Dionysus, a chthonic deity of the ancient Greeks is the one who "guards the being toward another of the earth and sky as the site of the wedding feast of man and gods. Only within the reach of this site, if anywhere, can traces of fugitive gods still remain for god-less men" (*ibid.*). Obviously this is not a reference to the physical site but to a specific region of Being. This region was lost in Western thought, at least until Hölderlin's elegies appeared. In Sudeep Sen's

⁶ "Denn der Gott der Rebe verwahrt in dieser und in deren Frucht zugleich das wesenhafte Zueinander von Erde und Himmel als der Stätte des Brautfestes für Menschen und Götter. Nur im Bereich dieser Stätte können noch, wenn irgendwo, Spuren der entflohenen Götter für die gottlosen Menschen zurückbleiben" (Heidegger 1977: 271).

But there is no flesh and there is no blood, there is no bread and there is no wine. This is a waste land that we inhabit in destitute time. Heidegger's further analysis of Rilke's elegies discovers that "Time is destitute because it lacks the unconcealedness of the nature of pain, death and love. This destitution is itself destitute because that realm of being withdraws, within which pain and death and love belong together"⁸ (Heidegger 1975: 97). Pain and love cannot be shared, one can react to those feelings but cannot participate, and they are the same kind of border between men that the one death draws between mortals and gods. Unity or togetherness is crucial here because from being together arises language that is the only way available to access Being authentically. And the pain is also a border of language, describable but unspeakable. Pain is like a cry; its articulation is rather as music—a motionless monologue of the speaker:

I am in pain, and I just want to cry, cry and cry—so that each searing cry can etch some fragment of a note which has gone unnoticed, so that each measure of pain is no longer diluted for people who listen because they have to,

claims Sudeep Sen in "Heavy Water". Heavy water is water containing a higher-than-normal proportion of the isotope deuterium. The isotopic substitution with deuterium alters the bond energy of the water's hydrogen-oxygen bond, altering the physical, chemical, and, especially, the biological properties of the pure, or highly-enriched, substance to a degree greater than is found in most isotope-substituted chemical compounds (McNaught and Wilkinson 1997). Relatively pure heavy water was produced in 1933, the year Heidegger became Rector of the University of Freiburg, joining also the Nazi party, thus taking the step that was crucial to his solitary existence outside the academic world in post-war Germany, in the time when his essay "What Are

⁸ "Dürftig ist die Zeit, weil ihr die Unverborgenheit des Wesens von Schmerz, Tod und Liebe fehlt. Dürftig ist dieses Dürftige selbst, weil der Wesensbereich sich entzieht, in dem Schmerz und Tod und Liebe zusammengehören" (Heidegger 1977: 275).

Poets For?” was written. With the discovery of nuclear fission in late 1938, heavy water became an important component of early nuclear energy programs during the Second World War. Since then, heavy water is an essential component in the design of nuclear reactors, for generating electric power and for generating nuclear-weapon-fuel. Nuclear energy beyond question is one of the most significant discoveries in the twentieth century and as such its influence exceeds borders of science, becoming an object of ethical, philological and also poetical thinking.

Both Heidegger and Sudeep Sen wrote after Hiroshima, the most visible and terrible manifestation of nuclear research and production. Perhaps nuclear physics is also one of the best articulated signs of man’s technological dominance over the nature and the world, seizing of Being by dividing it to infinitely small parts, while existence into-Being is the very opposite movement. Nuclear research is the mirror in which one sees that “Man stands over against the world”⁹ (Heidegger 1975: 108). Moreover, it is a complex disposition that consists of attitudes, actions and values.

Man sets up the world toward himself, and delivers Nature over to himself. We must think of this placing-here, this production, in its broad and multifarious nature. Where Nature is not satisfactory to man’s representation, he reframes or redispenses it. Man produces new things where they are lacking to him. Man transposes things where they are in his way. Man interposes something between himself and things that distract him from his purpose. Man exposes things when he boosts for sale and use¹⁰ (*ibid.*: 110).

This statement summarizes a huge socio-critical discourse that started in academia and mass media almost fifty years after it was

⁹ “Der Mensch steht der Welt gegenüber” (Heidegger 1977: 286).

¹⁰ “Der Mensch stellt die Welt auf sich zu und die Natur zu sich her. Dieses Her-stellen müssen wir in seinem weiten und mannigfaltigen Wesen denken. Der Mensch bestellt die Natur, wo sie seinem Vorstellen nicht genügt. Der Mensch stellt neue Dinge her, wo sie ihm fehlen. Der Mensch stellt die Dinge um, wo sie ihn stören. Der Mensch verstellt sich die Dinge, wo sie ihn von seinem Vorhaben ab-lenken. Der Mensch stellt die Dinge aus, wo er sie zu Kauf und Nutzen anpreist” (Heidegger 1977: 288).

written. There comes existentialism of the sixties, critique of consumerism and mass media, ecological awareness, even new-age movements and postcolonial studies. Heidegger, nevertheless, questions the very structure of this particular attitude towards the world, attitude that has taken so many shapes and been criticized so much over the following years.

Trust in the nuclear world, almighty reduction of things to smallest particles is an existential U-turn. We are atoms, but does it say something about the existence? As Sudeep Sen puts it in the same “Heavy Water”:

The irony of intimacy is such that the closest in the family seem the furthest away.

The closure, total zoom-in, does not allow seeing more, on the contrary—that leads the gaze away from the openness of the whole of Being as it is in its appearance. Things exist but Being itself cannot be extracted from the sum of things.

Families of electrons, protons and neutrons speed away, whirring in patterned loops, forgetting all the while that the heart of their orbit may actually feel and breathe.

Heidegger diagnoses inhuman aspects of the technological dominance in several of his essays, and in *What are poets for?* as well.

Modern science and the total state, as necessary consequences of the nature and technology, are also its attendants. (...) Not only the living things technically objectivated in stock-breeding and exploitation; the attack of atomic physics on the phenomena of living matter as such is in full swing. At bottom, the essence of life is supposed to yield itself to technical production. The fact that we today, in all seriousness, discern in the results and the viewpoint of atomic physics possibilities of demonstrating human freedom and of establishing a new value theory, is a sign of predominance of technological ideas whose development has long since been removed beyond the realm of individual's personal views and opinions¹¹ (Heidegger 1975: 112).

¹¹ “Die moderne Wissenschaft und der totale Staat sind als notwendige Folgen des Wesens der Technik zugleich ihr Gefolge (...). Nicht nur das Lebendige wird in der Züchtung und Nutzung technisch vergegenständlicht, sondern der Angriff der Atomphysik auf die Erscheinungen des Lebendigen als solchen ist im vollen Gang. Im Grunde soll sich

Dominance itself is a way of distraction—it is a hierarchical split and subjugation. As was mentioned above, the symbol of its fulfilment for both our Indian poet and German thinker is the atomic bomb.

Suddenly the clouds detonate, and all the petals,
translucent, wet, coalesce: a blossoming mushroom,
peeling softly in a huge slow motion.
("Remembering Hiroshima Tonight")

Even if so, the question remains unanswered—what are poets for? The last verses of the same poem bring us a step closer to the answer:

Tonight, real flowers are blooming
in the ancient Japanese moonlight.

Plants, flowers and beasts, repeats Heidegger time after time, are blooming and rooming in the openness of Being. The Nature is not the world, because nature alone is not capable of existence, *Dasein*. Man is a necessary and irreplaceable member of the original unity of the four—sky and earth, men and gods. Existence differs from Being in consciousness, although, again paradoxically, consciousness starts with the split of the original unity; consciousness is a twin of the language. "Ancient Japanese moonlight" here echoes steps of a Bharatanatyam dancer in the courtyard of an ancient temple. Moonlight as we saw has its own role in destitute time—it is the destitute light in the world's night.

As I mentioned above, time contains the unconcealed nature of pain, death and love. We could interpret the atomic bomb as the ultimate means of death in today's world—a belief that has supported the Cold War

das Wesen des Lebens selbst der technischen Herstellung ausliefern. Daß man heute allen Ernstes in den Ergebnissen und in der Position der Atomphysik Möglichkeiten findet, um die menschliche Freiheit zu beweisen und eine neue Wertlehre aufzustellen, ist ein Zeichen für die Herrschaft des technischen Vorstellens, deren Entfaltung dem Bezirk der persönlichen Ansichten und Meinungen einzelner längst entzogen ist" (Heidegger 1977: 290).

dialectics (not to forget that contemporary India possesses a considerable nuclear arsenal). But

What is deadly is not the much-discussed atomic bomb as this particular death-dealing machine. That has long since been threatening man with death, and indeed with death of his own nature, is the unconditional character of mere willing in the sense purposeful self-assertion in everything¹² (Heidegger 1975: 116).

Death is the same border of being as pain and love of being together. Still the juxtaposition of man and nature in a way alienates death, summoning it from the realm of Nature into the realm of existence. Mortals have become mortals since the separation from gods and that means after the split of the original unity of sky, earth, men and gods. That is not only a mythical Golden Age, because priests as well as poets have been given the power to establish this unity over again, and here comes the third of three Heideggerian Great Ones—Heracles. The one who stepped as equal among the gods from midst of the mortals.

The language of poetry

If the conciliation of man and nature, the negation of the technological world-view is what poets are for, a new question emerges—but how? Perhaps the answer could be found in one of the most popular Heidegger's statements about Being's being present in the word:

Language is the precinct (templum), that is, the house of Being. The nature of language does not exhaust itself in signifying, nor is it merely something that has character of sign or cipher. It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house¹³ (Heidegger 1975: 132).

¹² “Nicht die vielberedete Atombombe ist als diese besondere Tötungsmaschinerie das Tödliche. Was den Menschen längst schon mit dem Tod und zwar mit demjenigen seines Wesens bedroht, ist das Unbedingte des bloßen Wollens im Sinne des vorsätzlichen Sichdurchsetzens in allem” (Heidegger 1977: 294).

¹³ “Die Sprache ist der Bezirk (templum), d. h. das Haus des Seins. Das Wesen der Sprache erschöpft sich weder im Bedeuten, noch ist sie nur

Being in the world is an existence within the language. There is no Kantian *ding an sich* neither a symbolical universe without ontology. That is the human's position in the world—when we are in a room or a forest, even if we don't say it out loud, we are within the word "room" or "forest". The same applies to emotional states—there is no love and no pain without the words "love" or "pain", because feelings are unthinkable when untitled. Even when one does not know what he feels, consciousness of this feeling cannot be separated from the consciousness of not-knowing the word for it. Therefore, our existence is being in language. The realm of language as the house of Being is probably the only place where one can return from representations and objects, escape from man's being juxtaposed to the Nature and to Being. At the same time, mere speaking is not enough. Language itself is not something given—language is lived. In the process of living Being is actualized and it can be also lost. That is what poets are for—the speaking of Being. Sudeep Sen describes this speaking as a process of translating the original unity of thought and language into poetry:

Your poem translated itself so many times:
 from the incipient thoughts that brewed
 in your mind, as your mother tongue fumed
 straining to come together, trying

to emerge from shapelessness
 to a semblance of shape. Re-piecing
 together the shattered mirror, remoulding
 and reflecting light from unknown niches,

the poem switched tongue and its skin
 as the oblique image stamped its imprint.
 ("Translating Poetry")

etwas Zeichenhaftes und Ziffernmäßiges. Weil die Sprache das Haus des Seins ist, deshalb gelangen wir so zu Seiendem, daß wir ständig durch dieses Haus gehen" (Heidegger 1977: 310).

However, saying “A real poem defies translation, in every way”, he closes this poem. Then, what is a real poem? Western tradition, from Herder to Heidegger, would say that it is the song. The song is a poetical expression that roots far in the ancient past before the formal rules of poetry and writing were established. The song is a spontaneous revealing of Being, rendering inability of everyday language to speak essentially about the world as it is. Poetry repeats, resembles and imitates songs in this sense. But, if we accept that language is the home of Being, Rilke’s statement that “Song is existence”¹⁴ clarifies an answer to the question what are poets for. In Heidegger’s mind existence here means presence and could be used as a synonym for Being:

To sing, truly to say worldly existence, to say out of haleness of the whole draft and to say only this, means: to belong to the precinct of beings themselves. This precinct, as the very nature of language, is Being itself. To sing the song means to be present in what is present itself. It means: *Dasein*, existence¹⁵ (Heidegger 1975: 138).

If so, how can a poet, a singer or a thinker reach this precinct? For Hölderlin and Rilke it is the poetical world located in language’s capacity of revealing Being. This locality is defined by lightening of Being. This is realm of poetical thinking enlightened by truth. “Locality to which Hölderlin came is manifestness of Being and which, out of that destiny, is intended for the poet.”¹⁶ (Heidegger 1975: 97) However, locality as a spatial concept also characterizes the world of

¹⁴ “Gesang ist Dasein.”

¹⁵ “Singen, eigens das weltische Dasein sagen, sagen aus dem Heilen des ganzen reinen Bezuges und nur dieses sagen, das bedeutet: in den Bezirk des Seienden selbst gehören. Dieser Bezirk ist als das Wesen der Sprache das Sein selber. Singen den Gesang heißt: Anwesen im Anwesenden selbst, heißt: Dasein” (Heidegger 1977: 316).

¹⁶ “Die Ortschaft, in die Hölderlin gekommen, ist eine Offenbarkeit des Seins, die selbst in das Geschick des Seins gehört und aus diesem her dem Dichter zgedacht wird” (Heidegger 1977: 273).

being, physical existence. Locality is the localization of the poet in this world, for it allows speaking about this world. The world of mortals, mediated through words in language, is also the world of particular localities—places, regions and states. Therefore, it is natural that also such names often emerge in Sudeep Sen's poems. In this case Hiroshima is a historical or, one might say, ethical locality, at the same time being embedded in a particular landscape:

In the distance, the crown of Mount Fuji sits, clear
on the icy clouds, frozen in time with wisdom.
("Remember Hiroshima Tonight")

While language is Being's homeland, the poet has his as well. Homeland is the only place from where one can authentically speak about the Being:

Bophuthatswana appears pock-marked,
engulfed by the South African terrain.
Transkei, Ciskei and Lesotho too, are arced
to suffer the same fate:
Tongue-tied, colour-coded, land-locked.
("Independent Homeland")

The being in the openness of Being to sing, to think or write poetry means stepping into the light from world's darkest night to capture the light of truth for fellow mortals.

I step out
of the room's
warm safety.

I see
the morning light
struggling

to gather muscle
to remove
night's cataract.
("Prayer Call: Heat")

That is what Sudeep Sen is for.

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