

THE SECRET BY AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

Reviewed by Ruby Andredakis

A book of short stories by Aju Mukhopadhyay, which comprises fifteen short stories, all of a different topic, yet each story involves life, society itself, and bears everyday's secrecy regarding certain social facts: social problems. Although the writer mainly describes India, introduces and projects the Indian culture and tradition, as well as the way of life, the described social problems can be found all over the world. A natural calamity, flood, earthquake, bushfire or war, cause people and creatures to flee in search for possible safety; mass migration, refugees.

In his first story he describes the change that was brought to a young girl's life by a deadly flood. She had been swept to another city and found half dead outside a mansion's gate. She was taken in, saved by the rich owners and was included in the service personnel. The people were kind to her. Nevertheless, nature could not be disregarded. Love appeared between her and the young son of the family. A love that was forbidden, due to the rank of the family! The son should marry a rich girl and not even think about the poor servant! So the young man married a girl of his social rank, while the secret love kept up till the old age, when the writer reveals it within a conversation between the two.

How many secret loves are kept well sealed and concealed in the world, even to this day, in every society in every part of the world... Where is freedom of equality? So, a main problem the writer deals with is well hidden under the carpet and carefully kept there under a compromise, social and family secrets, which may eventually be revealed by the reappearance of the person involved. The writer brings forth the truth revealing the episode and producing the sequence of life.

Another serious social problem regarding secrecy is private plots and dangerous consequences, referring to young kids mainly school kids, approached and bullied by gangs from within the school, urged to criminality. The youngsters are slyly compromised in the gang of the 'brave'

ones and obliged to use violence, or take drugs and participate in terrorism, otherwise they will be considered cowards and not friends. In his story the author points out though that good upbringing from the parents has an important role in avoiding the complete destruction of the young members of society. The boy mentioned in this story, being conscientious feels guilty and cannot bear violence. He has been taught by his parents to respect life and acquires the courage to confront the leader of the gang eventually finding support from his father and the police.

War, invasion, occupation of a country, is another calamity that brings people fleeing for their life, leaving cadavers and destruction behind. Refugees! The Tibetan cause is mentioned in one of the stories. A cause that has been hidden in the drawers of the powerful ones, concealed by materialistic interests! The people that survived though have not forgotten their native country and their history and try to re-unite and plea for justice. They cannot act openly, as they might be considered a threat for the country that hosts them, so they meet secretly and get organized. What will they gain? That's another question. Even nowadays millions of refugees flee from Syria and other neighbouring affected countries seeking refuge to Greece and other European countries. While everyday people are drowned while sailing in small boats to safety, peace talks and negotiations and more talks take place within the International organizations and more bombs are falling demolishing what has been left in the country. In Cyprus forty-five years ago the Turks invaded and occupied the north half of the island; violence and atrocities took place and the locals became refugees in their own country. Those from the North came to the South. Efforts for reunification of the island have not stopped since however, success depends upon interests. People....they keep up their way in life, occasionally protesting, demanding, pleading...and waiting. Power and money and secret intrigues keep up from generation to generation, not only in one part of the world, but throughout it! This is a country's History! Therefore, the Indian problems that the writer mentions, are not only Indian; they are alike everywhere, they only have a different name!

Within some of his stories, the author reveals his respect and admiration for nature, for the jungles and the creatures within. For local traditions and legends and of the way of life in India,

mentioning development and continuation of life within it, stating that man can follow the stream of modernism, keeping a sweet memory of his past.

Work Cited

Mukhopadhyay Aju. *The Secret*. Gurugram; Haryana: Global Fraternity of Poets. 2019. Paperback. Price Rs.270 (\$18). Available among others with www.amazon.in and www.amazon.com

REFUGEES

Lack of respect for life,
And any human strife,
Results to violence and aggression,
Misery and depression.

Natural calamities or droughts
Cause mass migration of animals and ants;
They seek a refuge to survive!
Now, humans are trying to stay alive!

‘There’s a war,’ they say,
No one can stay!’
So people migrate in search of a haven;
Will they all find it, or will they go to heaven?

Thousands upon thousands they leave their homeland,
Seeking refuge in a strange land!
They walk for hundreds of miles;
Despair is on their faces, no smiles!

Hope for life is their only support,
They try to reach a port!
Men, women, children, young and old,
A biblical exodus, as at school we were told.

People of every age
And every social stage!
Here, survival commands
Despite hardships and demands!

Materialistic greed is a passion,
So life-traders present their service without compassion.
They offer boats at a heavy toll,
Safe arrival to haven will not be for all!

On the other side, people watch the refugees arrive,
-Those who have been rescued alive!-
They volunteer to help them survive.
Nevertheless, this unfair nations' evacuation
Must have no duration!

Can't any one stop that brutal war,
And a mighty global peace restore?
Provide happiness and prosperity for every nation
Without any discrimination!

Bio

Ruby Andredakis is Greek, Cretan, born in 1948 in Moshi - Tanzania, East Africa. She has obtained several diplomas in four languages (English, Greek, French and Italian), and has acquired a BA degree in Journalism and Creative Writing. She has worked as an English teacher. Since 1992, she has done a lot of translations and has written quite a number of short stories, poems and articles. From 2002 her work starts being published, occasionally being the featuring writer. She is the Founder of RUBINI PUBLICATIONS, Editor/Publisher of the yearly magazine "Creature Features –The Ark of Writing", which contains short stories, articles and poems referring to the creatures of the world. The magazine's aim is to project the creatures' character and their relation with humans through the ages. The magazine has been appointed as BEST Magazine containing poetry for 2011and 2016 by IPTRC, and she has been appointed by IWA as BEST EDITOR 2013 for the same magazine. The 1st and 2nd volume of "The Highlights of Creature Features", which is a collection of the best entries from issue 1-12 and 13-20 of the magazine, are also edited and published by her. She has also edited and published 'Gran's Tales, Tigga-The-WomBrat And His Friends' volume 1, by Elizabeth Price –Australia-, 'The Rainbow, Trilingual Poetry Anthology, -Russian, English, Greek-' by Dr. Adolf P. Shvedchikov, and My Junior Poems –English, Greek, Russian, French- by Olga-Rubina Panautas (aged 12 –now 15). She is also the publisher of "The Sons Of Camus Writers International Journal", which is yearly and edited by Miss Ann Davidson, Canada. "The Man From The Shadows Of Idi" is her first historical novel. She works in both English and Greek. Most of her work is written in both languages. Most of her poems have been translated into Russian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Hindi, Sanskrit (Indo-Asian Literature Academy) Chinese and Swahili too. She is married, has two sons and permanently residing Cyprus, since 1970. She has also been entered in the "Dictionary of Contemporary International Poets" and in the "World Poetry Yearbook 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015,". She is a member of the International Writers & Artists Association (IWA). She has also been appointed as BEST Translator 2013 by IPTRC (International Poetry Translation Research Centre). She has also been appointed as Editing Member of IPTRC. Creativity Prizewinner 2016 Honorary Member Maison Naaman Pour la Culture (MNAC), having her poem 'Alexander' published in 10 languages in the Foundation's

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Yearbook 2016 is her recent achievement. 2016, she has published a multilingual Poetry Anthology, “A&1 Is The Founder -50+1Poems In 10+1 Languages”. 2018, Poems included in the Contemporary International Poetry and 2018 and 2019 Poetry Prizewinner in Italian Poeti Della Società.

EPISTEME