

INTELLECTUAL GIFTS OF A TEENAGER POET

By Aju Mukhopadhyay

The poet is a teenager school going pert girl; always alert of her surroundings, of the presence of her friends and others around her own abounding presence. She knows well enough what the elders talk about her. By her inquisitiveness and good reading habits she knows more or less what many greats have already spoken about human life, of what is desirable and what is not. A precocious girl endowed with some wisdom, speaks about the usual happenings of life and our expectations from it. Highly ambitious, she takes up the cudgel to challenge her colleagues and resolves to prove her worth. On the way she teaches herself what needs to be done, makes promises, sometimes advises addressing others in neutral voice; didactic. She knows that she is being challenged for repeating what others have observed in their maturity; many of them were great. It requires her defending herself; thus begins the dialectic process which is a constant process of life, asserts a philosopher like Hegel.

My Diary and Other Poems by Ishika Bansal contains 47 short poems. This is the second volume of her poems in English after *Threads of Life*. Besides writing poems in English she has translated large numbers of poems in Hindi to English. Instead of environment she has acclimatized the language. Apart from poems we enjoy the company of a teenager school going poet and get poems fresh from the school compound where she still is. Let us enjoy her surrounding, the everyday life of a teenager poet:

A lot of noise, teachers yelling at us

Most probably the fish market . . .

Whistling, whispering and gossiping all around

My Hustling Class 40

Or

It feels so liberating and exciting

To step in a new room . . .

And meet old classmates again

One Grade Up- My New Classroom 69

Or when she is wishing her class friend on her birthday,

Sheer happiness, you're turning thirteen

Beware of all that looks attractive.

As you are entering the world of teens

A Birthday Present For A Friend 73

As Ishika Bansal, the poet improves in her poetry, gets some accolade, she is pulled by the legs as it's the wont of her dear classmates. She admits, "Yes, I copy, cut and paste / . . . My dynamic struggle, need a start /Because it's nothing less than a dream /To create a piece of art." (Copy, Cut and Paste 64) Coming to "Frenemies" the conflict is extended to a new height, "You're my classmate still /And I am still frenemy of yours / . . . Forgive me to pissed you /And censure you here /You made me realize /That I lack somewhere." (Frenemy 82-83) Here the anger lowers the language.

Sometimes she tries to justify her role in society or her position as a poet; the dialectical process sets in well:

A little mature in my poems

More than childish at home

What's more often clueless I am

No matter what, that's how I am.

That's How I am 44

She pays tribute to her teacher out of gratitude (Beauty Lies Within 68), gratefully accepts her mother's role as a homemaker (Mom 60) and accepts her father's help in shaping her life ("Those Supporting Shoulders-Happy Father's Day 84).

"Each Day, New Light" (46) is very short rhymed poem exuberating the newness in life. I am everywhere is an old idea but, "I am a chirpy bird's friend / In the blue sky /In the green meadow, I am (Where Am I 47) bring freshness. She is not a Nature-poet but

on the way she brings in Nature sometimes. Her poems are based on thoughts and ideas; they thrive on intellect. She asserts her way many a time. “Tremendous efforts, vision in the eyes /This is all I need to rise in life” (Impressions 57). “So, speak out, be aloud /Maybe you convince someone one day.” She asserts (Speak Out 42)

The past is gone, the present is going

And the future is still in our hands

Stand up for winning one day

The odds of life will forever end

Embellish Up Your Future 62

The poet’s heart suddenly becomes gloomy finding the ambience dark and pessimistic; but she believes in action, in rising up, so she urges, “looking out / Let’s urge for a change.” (A Sneak Look Outside 48) Observing her world selfish, finding others jealous of each other, too much self-centered, she realizes the futility of such attitudes, “Let us be high now, let others get demotion /This race is making people insane” (The Other Side of Today’s World 49)

Her maturity makes her precocious and the touch of wisdom makes her bit more understanding. She realizes that things mundane are ephemeral and time is ever fleeting. Even when in a class she realizes that, “The innocence lies in this hustle and bustle /Which will not be renewed again.” (My Hustling Class 40). Even when a child she realizes that childhood will not last forever. “Sometimes joy I attain / But the devastating point is /They cannot be relived again.” (Childhood 41) “We’ll have to leave the world one day /But our work will stay forever.” What a tremendous self-confidence, what a promise! (Our Work Lasts forever 75) Like everyone she knows that time and tide does not wait for anyone but the vibration of time makes her quite sensitive; thereby she stands above others as a poet.

Except some shades of feelings, nuances of things around, most of Ishika’s poems in this volume are products of her intellect. They are based on thoughts and ideas; not welling up from any sources deeper in her being. Her emotions are tuned towards success and achievements in life. She is highly intelligent and a well read person up to her

possibility up to this time, well aware of her surroundings. She has good stock of words and she has used them appropriately in most cases. Her poems are mostly short prose poems but do not fall under metric jurisdictions. Though she has written very short poems they are not couplets, tercets, quatrains, sonnets or of any other known forms of English poetry, not even of Japanese short verse forms. Her poems dazzle in the light of her intellect and wit, burning with the challenge to win and achieve.

Though it is true that few write poems which are published at her age, it may be argued that writing poems at an early stage of life are not that very rare. Names of at least some great poets come to my mind who either died early, in their teens or early youth, or stopped writing at that age, like Toru Dutt, Sukanta Bhattacharya and Arthur Rimbaud. Even Keats and Shelly, the famous Romantic English poets died quite early in their life. It may be said that some such poets would have shown greater examples of poetry had they lived and written up to their mature age. In fact most of the poets must have tried their hands in writing poems from their teens or little later though not published. We know of Tagore's rhythmical rhymes written at that age

Nevertheless, the credit of Ishika Bansal writing and publishing two volumes of her poems in English at her age is very good achievement. The creation of a poet of non-English origin, not living in English speaking world whose mother tongue is other than English, is an example of how one may really flourish in even foreign tongue if he or she rightly cultivates the language and assimilates it with his or her natural and cultural ethos. By that process it is Indian English as it is American English or African English in the respective countries. English remains English with different hues and local, cultural qualities. Ishika has acclimatized the language; written her poems in Indian English as large numbers of us, Indian poets and authors create. We adults must acknowledge what she has achieved in her teens.

Bio

Aju Mukhopadhyay (Pondicherry and Kolkata, India) is a bilingual award winning poet, author and critic. He has authored 36 books including ten books of poems, three books of short stories and one novel in English besides 12 books in Bengali. He has been posted as a world poet in some International World poetry sites on invitation. He is a regular contributor to various magazines and e-zines in India and abroad. His poems including Japanese short verses and short stories have been widely anthologised and translated in many international languages. A member of literary and environmental institutions, he is published as writer on wildlife, Nature and Environment besides biography and literature. He has published scholarly essays in large numbers of books and journals including on large numbers of Indian English poets. He is in the editorial and advisory board of some important literary journals. Besides other awards and honours he received Essay award, “Albert Camus Centenary Writing Award” by SCWIJ published from Cyprus. He was given Laureate Award in Best Author category by Literoma, Kolkata in 2020.