

Jaydeep Sarangi's Journey from Dulong to Beas

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All or most of the civilizations grew up on the banks of the rivers. Dulong is a small river meandering through the red-soil dry thick forest range of Midnapur district of West Bengal which sheltered the primitive people in collaboration with the earth on its banks, with sky overhead and minimum of basic comforts that men could manage to get out of Nature. But Beas is a famous river, one of the big five in far away Punjab, which sheltered the world famous Aryans and their civilization. No, they did not come from Europe or some such exotic land; they belonged to India and the surrounding lands without a modern demarcation. Movement of humans of different regions to the other regions continued throughout the pre-historic and historic periods, throughout the country and countries. Born at the banks of Dulong, Jaydeep Sarangi comes out of his home in search of his earlier homes elsewhere. This is an ever engaging journey of Homo sapiens from his adivasi homeland to his modern habitat.

Time without numbers the poet visits his prime home, physically and mentally, though he is a resident of the town and now the metro city for some years. He becomes nostalgic in different ways.

How my forefathers settled
On the bank of Dulong.
These green fields
These castles of mud and goats
All I owe.

(Sap in History. Beas/33)

The prime homestead with its concomitant surroundings, as he finds in the homes of the down trodden, through mental empathy becomes his own. He visualizes that he was once one of them, may be in some previous births.

The ghost of my previous birth

Makes me wild.

(My Old Flute. Beas/23)

And it continues variously in various poems,

And I was reminded of the torn mat
And an earthen lamp fed by castor oil.
Life's shackles are nothing but slavery.

(Desire. Beas/27)

I visualize life at a distance
Not caught in nagging time-
I could be a downtrodden!

(If I were a Downtrodden. Beas/19)

Aha, he remains with them,

Your bows attract me to work
Your goat takes me its own side;
I dream my own story in cool shade
Like a man directed towards
The honey of experiences.

(Your Identity. Beas/26)

I remain as a crow
Time-keeper for oral tradition
For centuries to come.

(Life Beyond. Beas/18)

Not only in his subconscious memory, he is, it seems actually with the primitives,
specially the downtrodden among them. While recalling the great Indian time when she
was spiritually awake, he cannot forget the downtrodden,

Mysterious yogis in the East chant
Holy songs.

Somewhere a naked child
Cries out of hunger.
His mother offers

Brests of no milk,
The child sucks water.

(The Tree of Life. Beas/29)

His deep love for the victims of injustice for centuries brings him to the path of war but it is not like the violent war of words by a revolting writer like Mahasweta Devi. His is a support by a fellow poet and writer, as the oppressed no longer can fight with bows and arrows like in their primitive stage, but fights with pen and paper.

I remember
How Kalyani, Meena and others
Through hard labour and strength within
Fight for their right.

They write
As they have no arrow to lift.

(Living Alone. Beas/22)

He feels genuine happiness when one of them excels in her life. He rejoices the achievement, written in black ink, a symbol of the black body of the achiever,

The College girl stands first
In university examination.
History is re-written in black ink.

(Your Identity. Beas/26)

See more of it here,

Local minority tribes blush
Like innocent flowers in heaven's garden.

(Kanakdurga Temple. Beas/45)

Every land had its aboriginals, either banished or finished. But we still meet some of them in different garbs in different countries though it may be that some traces of the aboriginal identity remains. "Old faces beacon us again and again / It is the past we fear . . . Mount Vancouver witnesses its history / Swiftly moving like Wai-iti River / Of the South Island of New Zealand." (You are re-visited. Beas/40)

Going through the lives of the adivasis in villages or country sides, in some forests and some foreign lands, the poet suddenly gets fodder for satire. With the light of sunshine he greets man with light banter,

Somewhere among the trees
Some rare species of monkeys
Jump from one tree to another
Like a busy man's schedule in a metro city.

(Kanakdurga Temple. Beas/46)

Through adivasis we can visualize the pristine forms of human lives, anywhere on earth, usually called tribe, but coming to Dalits, it is something formulated in later periods comprising of some low castes among the Hindus and persons converted to other religions, forming minorities. It is of mixed nature with political overtone. We often find clashes of castes within them, find them struggling with others in the society. Dalit has become a symbol of the oppressed class throughout the globe but there are controversies in the whole issue. There are adivasis among the Dalits but all Dalits are not adivasis. If one considers about the oppressed, it may go far. Are there not persons other than Dalits who are victims of discrimination and oppression, of utter neglect by the society? If they are not Dalits, is it because of their caste barriers? The society gets ebullient about it from time to time. The poet is concerned about the Dalits as with other oppressed victims of society; sometimes a pessimist, he is happy with the promises here, declaring war not with fellow men but with sleep, to be vigilant against oppression.

Who will think for the dalits?

Good time vanishes

Like earth bubbles.

. . . .

The red Sun

Promises a happy day . . .

The journey begins

Now the jaws are stiff.

We have announced

War against sleep!

(We Exist. /51-52)

Like all human beings the poet has some stories to tell of his personal and emotional life, of his failure and the rejection he faced from the beloved ones,

You stop before I can touch you,
 Your image vanished fast
 As earth bubbles
 When I overstepped the margin.

I remain on the door
 Stranded
 Waiting for it to be opened.

(When Door is the Margin. Beas/28)

Along with sympathy and love for the adivasis and dalits the poet has reverence for the great sages and rishis of the lore; reverence for Swami Vivekananda, Sri Chaitanya, Nityananda and Advaitacharya (Bengali Baul and preface in the book). His reverence for the bauls is understandable as they stand on their self-chosen path of the primitives, loving the earth and nature alike, singing mystic songs, paeans for Gods in fields and markets; living like the homeless. His best regards for Lalan Fakir is presented in his, "Bangali Baul." (Beas/58)

Finally, in one or two poems he comes out leaving all obsessions for some class or caste, away from the daily mundane life routine and plunges in experiences within; rare indeed. Great it is, greater if it is his. "Who am I"- is the basis of Raman Maharshi's quest for truth.

Who am I? What is my Being?

....

Nothing is in the awareness
 Still completeness pervades
 Within is like a serene lake
 Without thought waves I am awake

(When the Lamp is Lighted. Beas/36)

“Pain across the Salt Desert” is an eight lined poem which, like a puzzle or a mystery, takes us to another height without hearing what the teashop owner told the village folks at the village cross roads, in his stall, “Their smiles became broad, / Wrinkles ran deep. / Tea or no tea, many lost their jobs.” (Beas/37)

Was it a conspiracy or their knowledge of God?

Almost all the pomes in the book are written in one page; succinct but clear in their message and freshness. Published by a respectable and class publisher like Authorspress, the book referred has acquired a degree of excellence with its jacket cover in paperback. If there are a few lapses in print, it does not affect the work in any way, almost negligible. I hope that this debut publication of the book of poems in English will be followed by more freshness and wonder.

Work Cited

From Dulong to Beas. Jaydeep Sarangi. New Delhi; Authorspress. Paperback. 2012

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