

MISSING THE PUJO DAYS

By Aju Mukhopadhyay

Living away but keeping touch
with Bangla and Kolkata
I was afraid of visiting my ancestral place
during the festive extravaganza;
more the Pujos invited
more I was afraid of visiting
the heterogeneous sites
away from my mooring.
Painting the clay bare-body-parts with dexterity
finishing touches on Durga murthy
evoke nostalgia
as they decorate her with careful mania
producing different unknown Mothers
of different shapes, dresses, modes and colours
who would look at us eagerly without shies
with large eyes like our cherished companion;
it's an Open Invitation
to view the Mother from different angles of vision;
after all they are clay bodies, ever fragile
Immersed in water without guile.

Parody of age old practices
and forgotten rituals galore
would float in the WhatsApp of mobile sets
with hilarious uproar;

somewhere Pujo Mantras would be parodied
in rustic tongues indigested
somewhere skeletons of our ancestors sordid
would return train-loaded
after receiving the ritual foods
and water on the Mahalaya day;
all these to the modern intelligentsia
are insignificant paraphernalia;
they are fond of joke frolic and satire.
Bombastic speech and song
float in the air.

When everything is parodied
when police presides over the citizens' meetings
When people throng on the roads
not knowing which Durga to see;
who is the real Mother
who is a product of parody,
When before the usual dates
they flood the cities to see what others see
when all blinds come out
in their latest outfit to rejoice the festivities
missing the theme and heart of the festive moments,
I was afraid of visiting my ancestral place
during the festive extravaganza
living away but keeping touch
with Bangla and Kolkata.

Pujo days of our childhood and youth
redolent of festive mirth

are still fresh with sound and colour
those were the devout hours
less bombastic with less of fracas
and less digital tyranny;
they're dear to our heart
still fresh in our memory.

Bio

Aju Mukhopadhyay, settled in Pondicherry, is a bilingual award winning poet, author and critic, writes fictions and essays too. He has authored 30 books and received several poetry awards from India and USA besides other honours. He has published two volumes of short stories some of which have been chosen for noted anthologies. He has contributed essays on literary and environmental subjects in more than 50 scholarly books. He is a member of the Research Board of Advisors of the American Biographical Institute and registered in the Who's Who of Sahitya Akademi, India. He is Vice President of the Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics. A member of many national literary and environmental institutions, he is also published as writer on animals, wildlife, Nature and Environment.

He has so far published seven books of poems in English besides two in Bangla. One more book of poems is ready for publication. Eight books contain critique on his poetry among others besides such critiques on his poetry and fiction scattered in several magazines. His poems may be broadly categorised in three groups: On Nature, poems with spiritual overtone and feelings and poems on social, political subjects, some of which may be categorised as rants. He is very subjective in his subtle feelings and expressions. He is known as one of the noted writers of Haiku and such genres of poetry from India. Such works by him has been published in many international magazines and ezines. His haiku has been specially chosen by some editors and awarded ranks on merits. Quite a few of his poems of the Japanese variety have been published in international anthologies and collections. He has his poems published in 16 anthologies which include two recent publications one of which is an Indo-Australian anthology of poems by three poets each from Indian and Australia, titled Poetic Conventions. He edited some literary magazines in Bangla and is placed in the Editorial Board and Advisory Board of some literary

journals for Indian English writing. As Guest Editor he edited <http://twenty20journal.com>, an American Ezine for its Indian Edition; Summer Issue No. 3, 2011.

Besides the awards many of his poetic works have been acclaimed and honoured like one of his poems remaining at the top of the list of poems in www.asianamericanpoetry.com from December 2007 for about three months and inclusion of his poem in the list of top ten recent poems by www.Poetsindia.com. Lucidity Poetry Journal from Sugar Land, USA has awarded him Certificate of Merit for his poem, "Structural Violence" in June 2011. The American Biographical Institute offered him the American Order of Merit.

Following are the books of poems published by him in English. The Witness Tree, In Celebration of Nature, The Paper Boat, Insect's Nest and Other Poems, Aju Mukhopadhyay's Poems on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Short Verse Vast Universe and Short Verse Delight. The last two are books of Haiku and Tanka with some essays on the subject of Japanese short verses.