

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY, A SONG BIRD OF NATURE

By P.Selvaraj

I am privileged to write this article on Aju Mukhpadhyay's pat poems on Nature and Environment based on the anthology of poems titled, *Poetry on Nature and Environment*. This contains his published and unpublished (in any book) poems on the subject of Nature and Environment within the two covers of the paperback edition of the book published by The Poetry Society of India, Gurgaon, in 2017. The title of the book is fascinating as the interrelated subject of Nature and Environment, interests me too.

The first poem, Sky and Truth (1) portrays sky as an expanse, ever expanding, inspiring the poet to christen sky as Truth. The facets of truth are explored by the poet with excellent imagery. Sky touches the Sea (2) reveals the strength of imagination the poet is blessed with. Stretching the sky to touch the sea is a beautiful expression. The extension of his imagination to include the reason for the stretching of the sea is fantastic. Superhuman artistic consciousness has created so many colours of the sky. Changes in sky-colours are vividly and crisply painted by the poet. The emerging canvass is a remarkable treat for the eyes: Colours of the Sky (3). The fourth poem is also on sky; Autumn Sky (4) is misty albeit the morning glow is near. Such a lens help me recall and recite Shelley (Ode to the West Wind. This poem is also about the autumn), "If Winter comes can Spring be far behind?" The types of clouds presented in the poem are in accord with meteorological terms. The King and the Artiste (5) narrates how a king's crown fades but the artist creates town, hill and river. What a contrast! Can king be anywhere near God? In no way, concludes the poem.

The reflection of a bright star in clean (also clear) water appears to the poet as blooms. The poet uses the analogy of love for star and of lover's heart for clean water. The essentiality of purity of heart is highlighted at the end closing lines of the poem, Bright Star Blooms (6).

Morning (7) begins forever, of course! Morning is simple (routine) but it is life's new phase. Nothing is as good as the morning. Ask Wordsworth! The poem is loaded with poetically worded or expressed quotes.

Night and day do not stay. Do they? They are born for a while to pass away. The day is lost in sunlight and returns to the womb (very difficult to use some other word) of time. The Day is Lost in the Shimmering Twilight (8) sings how the day is kept at bay. The transient nature of life is amazingly amplified in this poem. The next poem, Journey of the Day (10) restates that reality in new phraseology. The day struggles hard to reach the gate (destiny) of the shadowy dawn. The day resolves to return, anyway! (If there is sorrow in the evening, well, joy comes in the morning, scripture says).

In The Solar Eclipse on a Birthday: 24 October 1995 (11) the poet exhorts a rationalist (even believers) to probe each natural phenomenon. Man's root in moon-dream, sun-worship and love-flower is certainly beyond our reasoning. That's belief! But the sky is blessed with sun's rays. The practice of sun-worship is difficult to justify for it over simplifies God's creation. The poet's view that natural phenomenon becomes a part of our life is understandable.

Sky and the Rain (12) is ringing throughout. Let me mention in particular: "And now the slaty sky /without being shy"! (12) I will add: naughty sky, because of what the poet says it does, looking at what's going on below, intimacy between spouses. The camera zooms on! We can see such subtle humour in many of O. N. Gupta's poems. It rains. When there is an intermission what does the sky in companion with the clouds do? The poet's repertoire deserves appreciation.

Image of a Rustic Girl (13) is painted very well by the poet. The damsel carrying dry wood had to run faster than her mood homeward for fear of getting the dry wood on her head drenched. Gossip mongers see her as a naughty angel. Rustic girls have that look, I think, who bothers about gossip of or around her, anyway!

Flowery Laughter of Spring (14) depicts the season of spring as a blessing in the form of flowers, fruits and births. The poet calls spring as the king of seasons. Why not call it the queen of the seasons? Divinity is acknowledged throughout the poem. The poet uses excellent phrases like nature's action and natural selections; mood of nature and creative contentment. In other words poet is praising nature as psalmists do. The good things about spring are carried over to the next poem, Spring of Life (15). Spring is seen as the great creative laughter of Nature. Spring is associated with meaningful rich expressions like passionate, erotic, flowery and what not?

The poet now goes on to talk about Winter in a South Indian Town (17). Winter in North India may be harsh but it is enjoyable in South India. Nice comparison! South Indians (Southerners) are glad to utter, 'Welcome , pleasant Winter!' every year. The poet, as many citizens of South India, is not oblivious of Climate Change, a word of caution.

Fragrance Seasonal and Eternal (18) deals with the merit of all seasons and beyond. The fragrance beyond seasons is an extraordinary event that shows Divine love and grace. Sensing that is a marvelous spiritual experience. The poet should have experienced it to write about it. Exuberance and fragrance are wonderful things!

"flowing dancing towards the sea" is Riverine character that shows "everlasting felicity"- Riverine Character (19). Falling, vastness, sunken, dazzling, flowing, flooding, caring, carrying, plunging, hewing, growing and dancing-oh there is so much to rivers' character! In the next poem, Life a River (20) mystical approach is quite telling at the end. A River (21) presents the same kind of approach although in different wordings. It is clear that the poet has enjoyed every moment of life and is quite sure of eternal life- flowing beyond the sea to glowing infinity. Blessed assurance as a hymn begins!

No one knows when the world came. No one knows if the world was already there. Such a thought occurs At the river bank (22). The poem begins with line, "and quite flows the river"

(22). At the river bank is a continuous philosophical thinking the poet is immersed in. The poem reminds me of the literary creation, *Quiet Flows the Don* by Mikhail Sholokhov.

The poet is quite familiar with the names of fishes. Fish habitats are indeed a world apart from the earth. Fishes in the Water (23)'s finale is interrogative. Do we resemble the life of fishes? Tin fishes, shell fishes, marine fishes, freshwater fishes . . . I don't know how we could resemble the life of fishes, in general. Perhaps diversity is the point made.

The alarming ferocity of Tsunami 2004 (24) is captured with deep concern in the line,
An idiot hour in the waning year, Two Thousand Four
Destroyed

What for aeons so far the centuries made.

The poet looks at the other side of the philanthropy too.

Aju in his Ode to the Sea and Beach of Pondicherry (25-26) laments how Pondicherry has almost lost or is losing its attraction mainly for the sea in the name of development. Life and Death Hugs each other (27): The biological phenomenon of an organism that is dead giving birth to innumerable living things is explained by the poet that way. Does a lake has many a face? Of course it has as the poem The Lake (28) reads. A damsel has many faces in life's race too! A good but rare analogy. Boats Vanished (29)? At the lengthening of shadows they do, as in life. Waterfall (30) is unaided as it falls, foams and flows, free. But do we allow it to flow freely? This is my thought. A Mysterious Valley (31) neither claims a surrender nor incites a suicide. It's so mysterious!

Air (32)-there may not be wind, gale or cyclone but there's always air that we breathe in and breathe out. "colourful air of the spring brings lovers closer" (32). The poet's fascination for

spring appears here too. Colorful air? Is it because it passes through colourful flowers and foliage of flora of immense varieties?

We could learn humility from The Grass (33) and simply bloom without any fuss. The grass way! The Grasshood (34-35) lists its other species like bamboo. Contrary to the characteristic of the grasshood humans are bent upon degrading and destroying it, oblivious of what would happen eventually.

To the Pot-bound Beauty (36) brings out the joy of agriculture. It's not free for cultivation. It involves cost. In The Tree (37-38) the poet lauds them telling that their tales are beyond reason and science. Very true, even biologists would agree.

The Crows (39) compares a flock of birds and a single bird in a quick contrast. The Profiles of Birds (40-41) shows keen observation by the poet, summed up with a philosophical bent. Ornithologists would appreciate this poem. The poet is a lover of music too! In Bird's Notes (42) he wonders where the rhapsodic calls of an unknown bird have gone. He cherishes the notes, obviously. The very next poem, Cuckoo the hidden Bird (43) compares bird behavior. This poem is also replete with musical terminologies like chorus and fortississimo. Wow! Periyar lake has naked logs (of trees) looking at the sky, birds perch on although for a while. Read, Rampicks welcome the Birds; Periyar Lake (44).

The Lovers of the Dark (45) are living things in the habitat of abandoned mines (caves). When insect's nest vanishes why the hell we should bother about our civil construction? A pertinent question from the Insect's Nest (46). How an ant colony is built up is vividly presented in Ant's Hut (47). Who can boast of his or her creative talent? Don't we imitate what we observe in Nature? A Creative Artiste (48) - a thought provoking poem. Bumblebee Bamboozles (49) has an important message that,

Nature has more in store

To shock the recalcitrant therefore. (49)

Bumblebee's flight just one example.

Like corporal life dust
cannot hold very fast (50)

A revelation on observing The Dust (50). After reading Nature (52) I understand why primitive culture was so close to nature. While flora and fauna live in the heart of the wild wild lives are camouflaged in the heart of the elite. (54)

This is not the first poem in which the poet draws life-lessons. In the Heart of the Wild (53-54) versus wild in the heart! Peace Engraved (55)- Peace is engraved in each face Of every living thing on earth's surface (55)

The poet has used the words, each, every and surface."Everything passes on for ever" (57), Time Whispers on my Ear (56-57) concludes that way. Everything is flowing, not stagnant.

Sixteen poems are there in the second section of the book-Environment, Ecology and Culture.

The Death of a Bird and Hunter (61-62). Greed and lust pierce our heart. It is a metaphysical poem as many in the anthology are. Arribada (63-64) is a poem about predation and destruction of marine turtles and their ecosystem. The poem is a movie on the biological aspects of the species.

Nature is groaning for freedom. Even in pilgrim centres that are more like tourist spots Nature Groans (65) because of intrusion by man. Plagued by Earthquake (66-67) narrates the tragic events following an earthquake in Nepal in 2015. Nature's puzzle is hard to solve. Natural calamities like earthquake warn us to behave properly with sky, earth and water. That's The Caveat from the Earth (68). Techno-mania prevents or delays our taking a cue.

Products like coffee, tea, rubber and minerals have indeed stolen man's hearts. The root cause of degradation and destruction of natural resources is brought out in Fall of a Habitat (69-70). If a habitat dies so do humans surrounding it.

Some humans spread more fragrance after they leave this world. The Death of a Rose (71) is an amazingly allegorical poem. Man Fumbles with Nature's Bounty in Sundarbans (72-73)- Does man really fumble? The poet says yes and qualifies it by adding the imperative to let Nature live on its own. Trying to disrupt or distort nature's symphony is detrimental and dangerous. Ecosystem management is enriched by this technically sound poem. Centuries linked by human greed have come together to churn the sea to get hydrocarbon. What would result only time will tell. Frantic Arctic Rush (74-75). Look at the words; frantic and rush. It's indeed a mad, mad world!

Poaching spoils the natural world. Silence in the Forest (76) tells us many stories real and threatening. Intruders destroy it in one way or the other. About a National Park (77) warns about the consequences of axing and killing and smothering. Ultimately humans axe themselves. In Woods are Lovely but not Dark and Deep (78-79) the poet sums up his experience of walking through the forest this way: "Joy was infinitely greater than the trouble faced." (78) A thrilling experience, indeed! Tiger at the Focal Point (78-79) points how happy hunters have become guilty poachers. This is a complex poem with many themes. God has created the tiger and the deer. The divine purpose is hard to explain.

The bliss of nature air-conditioning cannot produce is an example to show how living naturally is the only way to living really in Living Naturally, Living Really (83-84). Enough is enough with simulations! Environmentally Yours (85) lists how humans treat the environment with utmost callousness like throwing, spitting, urinating, heaping and so on at odd places. The poem reads like a letter to a reader. The concluding poem, Solace in Nature (86) passes on a simple message to humans. Can we get solace on streets with overflowing waste-bins here and there? Of course not! Look at the sky, the sun, the moon or the star, and looking at the trees and birds gives us solace in the heart.

I am glad to have gone through marvelous poems on Nature and Environment. The poems are rich and are in detail. Poet's familiarity with technical nomenclature is awesome. His flair for composing poems with a flow is equally awesome. The anthology is a treat for the mind and interest of the readers. The poems are appealing to ecologists dealing with different ecosystems. Biologists and geographers would appreciate the excellent contribution by Aju Mukhopadhyay. Having shared a few things about his work I want to say just one thing: I want to read it again!

References

- ✚ Mukhopadhyay Aju. *Poetry on Nature and Environment*. Gurgaon, Haryana: The Poetry Society of India. 2017. Paperback. pp. 86.

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Bio

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