

Introduction to Mukesh Raval's Collection of Poems:

POTS OF URTHONA

What are my words if win not the world
And heal not the hearts hardened or hurt?

Mukesh Raval

(‘A piece of paper and a pen’)

Pots of Urthona is the debut collection of poems by Mukesh Raval. He has not learnt poetry, he has lived it. His life itself is a poem assimilating twists and turns, surprises and shocks within it. He is a *Maker* since he has molded mishaps of life into poetry. Life has taught him, but then teaching must continue and so he has taught those who criticized him. To surprise and shock of many, including his critics, he is coming with this collection of poems to entertain and to enlighten the world. But then he is not a new poet, no, it would be an injustice to call him a new poet. Many of his poems have already been published in U.K. Internet Search Engines have witnessed the ways readers all over the world hunt for his poems. More than 500 responses of readers to his poems received from all corners of the world on Poetry Websites would suffice for his popularity. He is sought for and hunted after poet on Websites. There is still one more feather in his cap; for he has discouraged his disease by encouraging *joie de vivre* in him.

In William Blake's poetics, Urthona represents imagination within the individual. It is viewed in mystic tradition as the redeeming power for the world. The appropriateness of the title of the present collection then lies in the fact that many poems sincerely aim at saving the humanity as well as the earth. The present collection is a curious mix of poems. Several are romantic pieces, many present biting realism, a few are full of mysticism, a few others are even autobiographical and some Haikus present existential dilemma. Several poems are graphic in description, but then many others divulge the hidden in the human heart.

Coleridge held that a poet does not merely express emotions in his poetry, but arouses emotions in his readers. Mukesh has wielded his pen not only to communicate his emotions, but also to arouse emotions in his readers. Poems in the present collection are not grand, and grandeur, let us not forget, often turns out to be deceptive or grandeur may dazzle for awhile and then may fade into nothingness. These poems are not grand, but they are real both in themes and spirit, several even eye-opener pieces. And above all, (I have faith with hundreds of his readers) these poems would not fade into nothingness.

As a poet Mukesh is a humanitarian; he stands for love and mercy, beauty and order and voices against violence, ugliness and anarchy. ‘Burning Hell’, written in the fashion of Tagore’s ‘Where the Mind is Without Fear’, is a prayer to save a soul from the man-made Hell where heartlessness prevails. In ‘Corruption’ the poet moans the scams destroying great India:

One by one
The scams come out
Like the rats from a plagued house.

How beautifully he describes the attack on World Trade Centre!

Destiny could not cease the death on wings
What a spring it was! An autumn flower sings.

“Everything in proportion pleases more”, the poet declares in his first poem of the collection—‘Rain All along’ and this love for order and proportion is reflected in ‘A Tribute to World Trade Center’. A broad-minded poet, Mukesh sincerely pays tribute to the victims of W.T.C., but at the same time avoids attacking people of a particular faith. In ‘Standing at the Feet of Gandhi’s Statue’, written in sonnet form, the poet sincerely pays tribute to the father of the nation:

The size matters not nor the color
The strength of a soul is real valour.

But after three quatrains, the couplet at the end shocks us:

The cup of freedom you filled to brim
We spilled it half and shattered the dream

In 'It's not your fault, Haity' the poet's sensitivity to earth-quake victims and dissatisfaction with scientific experiments is reflected. In 'Tsunami', the poet addresses to brutal Tsunami waves. 'Where Borders meet' depicts duty-bound soldiers, while 'The Rickshaw Puller' presents a paradoxical juxtaposition between the rickshaw driver's pains and the BMW owner's drive with pride. In the mania for G.D.P. of the country, the noble workers of the country like rickshaw drivers go unheard, unsung and ignored:

He pulled the rickshaw
And pulled his lungs too
On the trafficked road of capital Delhi;
And drank some smoke
Which the passerby BMW emitted
Proclaiming the G.D.P. of the country

In 'Men versus Mosquitoes' the hunger for blood is artfully projected with allusions to Hitler and Fascism. With prevailing birth-image, the poet supports the Egyptian rising in 'Push Egypt, Push...' Even children have their place in Mukesh's poetic world. 'Make our home a lovely sight' voices desire of quarrelling parents' children to make their home a lovely sight. 'Ode to Beauty' is replete with irony and its effect is heightened at the end of the poem. The poem brings forth the theme of rape:

Her only fault
Her beauty...!
And she remembered her literature class,
"A thing of beauty is joy for ever".

The poet in Mukesh loves relations and constantly searches to celebrate and to renew relations. In this sense, he is not a recluse, but *a poet of people*. In 'My Sky...My Shadow', he sincerely confesses his indebtedness to his father and in 'The breeze that relieves pain' he celebrates motherly affection. 'Come Next Winter' is an invitation to once parted friends to meet again. He celebrates his bosom friend Sanjay's 42nd birthday in 'A piece of my heart has turned forty two'.

Days were the birds that one by one flew
A piece of my heart has turned forty two

One interesting thing to note in this collection is the poet's portrayal of nature. He beautifully captures the scenes and sounds of nature. Language flows at ease and similes and metaphors seem to figure very effortlessly. In 'Rain All along' the poet claims:

Everything in proportion pleases more
Ships over-laden reach not the shore

In 'Summer Bells are ringing' the romantic image becomes striking for its sensuousness.

Newly married pots emanate musky mating smell
Night queen smiles at summer by ringing her bell.

The confused bride in 'The Wedding Night' is compared with a drowning ship:

Confused she stared
Like a drowning ship in the storm

In 'Forbidden Fruit' the poet writes

I like a gloomy farmer stare the sky
And see the dispersing clouds of hope

And the alliterative effect pleases in poems like 'Goddess Ganges'

Gods gaze Ganges going gorgeously.

One of the most interesting poems in the collection is 'The fair skinned beggar' which brings a beautiful personification of sunlight. Sunlight, the fair skinned beggar, is a dramatic personae in the poem doing beggarly activities and a little bit of mischief too. One can not resist the charm of citing a considerable part of the poem.

He jumps on our roof
And slowly walks down
To the balcony of Mrs. Maria,
Drinks water and quenches his thirst
From the hanging bowl for birds,
Peeps into her house,
Watches her napping in her chair,
Softly touches her cheeks
Says something into her ears

And walks down
Toward West
Singing a song
Swinging his hands
Carelessly as ever.

In 'Whose house is this?' the activities of nature's beings is graphically described:

A shrill cry of the moth and whistle of house cricket
The sound of feasting ants, tow pigeons making love

Some of the poems have got philosophical dimensions to them. In 'Destination' the poet claims:

I am a station
A railway station
Countless trains packed with thoughts
Bound to eternity depart from me.

'Smoky Circles of Existence' is a philosophical poem depicting love for cigar:

She surrenders to my will,
Offering her every charm to my lust

And yet the poet will vacate her beauty so that she may bloom again like Phoenix. One such poem is 'River of Voices' about the cycle of Transmigration. A few poems like 'Mystery' and 'Zero' and 'The mysterious waters' have Sufi elements. Sometimes echoes of modern poetry are heard, as in 'I'm not alone':

The smell of your touch rises within me.

It is hoped that this collection of poems will be appreciated by those from all corners of the world who claim that they have the ability to recognize talent. Then Mukesh will have to soon bring his second collection of poems.