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Mastery, Magnificence and Majesty in the Poetic Soliloquy

Taj Mahal- The Monument of My Love- A Poetic Monologue by Dr. T. Swamidoss
Book Review by Dr. V. Sunitha

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Dr. T. Swamidoss' poetic monologue **Taj Mahal** is enriched with poetic and artistic prudence. The book is a sumptuous word feast to the aesthetes. Indisputably the poet is an aficionado in the art of writing verse. His profound penetration, meticulous study and splendid information that explicate the lifestyle of Mughals belonging to the distant past authenticate it. The very word Taj Mahal tickles our fancy and spurs on to espy it. Inundated in the pandemonium of contemporary life style, the splendid words that scroll through the pages of the book take us to an enthralling and awe-inspiring sojourn to the world pride Taj and the opulence of Mughal Empire. The poshness of the Kho-i-nur diamond, Persian maiden and the peacock throne of the bygone era holds us spellbound. Love between Prince Khurram and Mumtaz, the quoting of Ali Baba and the forty thieves and his magic cave and the universal phenomenon 'smile' gratifies the writers' mastery in using imagery in Part- I titled, **Meeting Mumtaz**.

Part- II titled, **Marriage and Honeymoon** opens out the vistas of happiness by making us envision the love between Mumtaz and Shahjahan. Hats off to the poet for his prolific but vibrant adjectives. 'Golden dreams', 'silver stream' 'emerald lawn' 'lush valley' 'love-sick- koel' and the likening of Mumtaz to heavens are rich enough to drive home the vivid picture of the conjugal bliss and the enchanting fascination between the newlyweds. The quotes from Wordsworth, Byron and the Persian poet Omar Khayyam have come handy to the writer to unwrap the marital intimacy between the honeymooners. Their pining for extended nights to delight in the ecstasy of one another's company certainly knocks at the cherished moments of readers' experience.

In part- III titled, **Warning** the lustrous beauty of nature is very much felt by Dr. Doss. His magnificent words are powerful enough to picture the serene and tranquil beauty of nature. The equating of the mundane birth and death process in human life to the process of nature with a striking rhythmic verse is noteworthy.

Part IV **Lament** relates the ruing and moaning of Shahjahan to whom the departing of his beloved is more than his flesh and blood could stand. To relate the

mighty point that the creator's will is the ultimate and we are just dolls in the puppet show Dr Doss has deployed the potter and his noble profession of making pots. As a living dead the emperor's awaiting for death is poignant to note.

The V part titled **Nature's Empathy** elegantly draws us to the psyche of the angst ridden, dolorous emperor who mourns for his wife's expiry. The somber atmosphere of nature bearing a bleak look has so much to have a stake in the emperor's catastrophe. The waning silent moon, the mourning Yamuna breeze, nightingale and its sad tale, the anxious birds of Gulmargh, snowy peaks, barren rocks are powerful symbols utilized to the best in order to join hands with the emperor's inner fret. The imagination that the flowers would fade and fail to blossom and the birds would refrain from singing deploring their monarch's demise scores brownie points.

In part VI **Seeking Consolation** the emperor affirms that paying visitation to holy places and shrines would be a source of solace and would alleviate his despondency. Robust examples like thousand years fame Tansen's music, Nadir's fine dance and Nymphets intoxicating liquor convey that the woes of wife's death and the magnitude of Shahjahan's wail are inconsolable. The lines from Keats that calls attention to sensuous feelings are approving. The striking rhythm like sixteen, nineteen, seem, dream, haste, past, exist, present conveyed in the short verse are pulsing and purposeful. The verse which unveils the profound pining of a true spouse is consummate and imposing. Tears may trickle from the sensitive eyes when Shahjahan pines,

“You took only a minute to die
But left me many decades to grieve;
How to spend my bitter years
Oh! In silence, sighs and tears! (19)

Part VII **Building Tajmahal** is about the sweat, toil and labour that goes with the construction of an outstanding artistic astonishment called Tajmahal, the perpetual beauty which has obtained an everlasting position in the pages of history. It is not the only fact that twenty thousand men working for twenty two years that makes one open mouthed but also the attribute that the architectural wonder is one of the world's wonder and India's prestigious symbol even after four hundred years of its construction of it makes us raise the collar. The description of the dome resembling the one in Jerusalem, minarets, bright tear drop falling over Mumtaz's tomb and the panoramic view of the full moon night on the marble stones may prompt anyone to enchant and feast the eye by paying a visit to the timeless artistry the Taj. The comparison of shimmering droplets on the tomb to that of the angel's tears is praiseworthy.

Part VIII **Unique in itself** affirms the distinctive and peerless workmanship of the Taj. The poet with his captivating flair of using words sheds light on the other wonders of the world only to aver that the Taj is exquisite and second to none. Enriched statistical

details on Pisa tower covers this section. Anything born in the world has to perish, may it be the historical monument Tajmahal or its creator Shahjahan and his empire but the pristine love that he carried for his wife is eternal is the widespread thought that strikes a chord in this section. Despite the automated, robotic highly technological life style the line, 'My Taj had graced this earth'(27) is apposite for all the generations.

Part IX – **Aftermath** wets our eyes of the poignant state of the architects who created the marble mausoleum. Shahjahan and his mahal have attained an inexorable elite position at the cost of the amputation of their crafty hands. Dr. Doss turns his vision to disclose the agony and anguish the Persian architects would have felt to preserve the word 'unique' before Tajmahal and the atrocious attitude of the emperor.

The line, "If it is the second visit, you'll become a poet." (31) intensifies the extent of impact that Taj would create to its visitors. It is powerful enough to trigger the aesthetic sense and mind's eye of a common man. The visitor may become a poet, an admirer fathoming the depth of emperor's love towards his wife that is explicit in the construction. What I wish to communicate here is rather than paying visitation to the lofty monument the poets splendid words drafted with poetic subtlety, usage of adjectives like emerald, lawn, crystal glory of Taj, joyous ecstasy, rhythmic steps and relating Urvasi, the elegant dancer to Taj and Narada, an enchanting singer are cogent and enables us to envision the marble wonder. It substantiates that art of writing is gifted only to a few and the poet is one among that few. The last lines bear out that the criticism on Taj are unworthy as the money and labour spent on it is insignificant when compared to its alluring beauty. It is a feast to manifold eyes.

Part X is titled **Mumtaz**. This chapter is dedicated to the celestial queen Mumtaz. To the emperor Mumtaj was not only the enthralling pulchritude but also the pillar of strength. Mumtaj has been juxtaposed with Sita, in Hindu mythology to accentuate her affinity and penchant for her beloved. The images, 'shadow', 'instrument', 'agent', 'sword', 'shield' etc apart from rhyming alike pronounces the mutual concern between the couple. The chapter leaves an agonizing note on the ineluctable aspect of death that has estranged the conjugal bond of the compatible couple who have experienced the domestic bliss and distress of life together for the past nineteen years.

Part XI **Of Love** is permeated by the redolence of love. Quote from the Bible and the story of Adam and Eve are enlightening examples to depict the power of love between the king and the queen. The delicate detail that husband and wife become one flesh from Genesis of the Bible is riveting. The omnipresent truth that a girl submits to her husband's love and trust anticipating the promotion of mother's status from being a bride is highlighted in this chapter.

In part XII **Epic Lovers** the poet extols the power of imagination. In the context of imagination versus reality, imagination holds the upper hand to the poet. Tales created in the mind's eye are potent and exerts influence than that of the real life chronicles authenticates the author. Lines drawn from Keats **Ode to a Grecian Urn** and **From the Letters** adduce his view. The word 'Desert love' is an oxymoron. One should say hats off to the poet for his vision and mighty pen that create wonders in the world. All the treasures of the world are packed exceptionally in the compact three lines that highlight the significance of poet and his art. "God had made a world of mud. But the poets create a land of gold; where we can see a diamond bird sitting on a silver tree singing golden songs, signifying the eternal truth that 'Life is short but art is long'." (37)

Part XIII is **Love Divine**. Views on love pervade this chapter too. The notion that love is abiding is manifested through Shakespeare's puissant lines from his Sonnet. The fact that wife's deference to husband is in turn bestowed with husband's love for her and their children submits evidence to the bonded Indian family set up. The emperor's pristine love has enabled him to have his sepulcher next to his wife after breathing his last. Amidst the malls and skyscrapers of the contemporary era Tajmahal is a matchless beauty and the rich cultural heritage.

The following chapters titled, **Empire Building** and **Blend of Art and Architecture** are in-depth analysis of the invaders of the Sultans of Delhi. The forethought and ingenuity of Tughlak in introducing leather coins, the statistics about the great wall of china, the inscription of the Quran all over the Tajmahal and the political unity brought by Mughals makes one open-mouthed. Gajni's plunder and his good works are aptly narrated by the succinct proverb, "Robbing Peter to pay Paul." The rulers and invaders, the art and architecture in the yesteryears receives due prominence in the pages ahead. The Mughal dynasty and its golden rule that assures peace and prosperity makes us to pine for it amidst the predicaments of global warming, pollution, scarcity of resources of the modern era. The very picture of Mughals dynasty, their stunning and everlasting art and architecture, musicians and distinguished writers of their court, the prominence and the elite position offered to Hindus in Muslim rule, the golden age of the Guptas enriched with cultural expansion and the drastic entry of the British rule in India are a few distinguishing features that were the precepts of the writer's pen.

The chapter XVI **Imprisonment** strikes a chord and triggers a dart of panic for nemesis of the builder of the marble wonder and the fact that History repeats itself. His subjection to devilish indignity and solitary confinement makes anyone to commiserate with his deserted and wretched state. Shahjahan's plead to safeguard the marble beauty for the posterity has ofcourse been ignored in the present context is doleful to note. It is a love beyond words and a mahal beyond appreciation but every effort of the writer to unveil the subtle but intense beauty is elevating and receives standing ovation. Even the style of font selected for the short verses arouses inquisitiveness and confers acclamation.

The very line, “As a bride draped in white” (52) personifies Tajmahal to a pulchritudinous bride clad in white.

Part XVII is named **Prison-Philosophy**. The Sanskrit term ‘Pra-savam’ and its meaning that imply birth and death is striking. Treatment of death in a new dimension where it is considered as a veil between two rooms and giving an affirmation that it is not an end of life ‘but a gateway to new highs’ is interesting to note. Quote from Chinese philosopher Confucius appends this view.

XVIII chapter is christened **The Trust**. While riposting the query about the worthiness of life the poet ascertains the immense importance of God and the unshakeable trust on him. The purport behind one’s birth need to be fathomed as life is not the ongoing process of mundane activities is made explicit. Thus the poet-critic’s stately lines along with disclosing the tale behind the lustrous palace also drive forth the message of righteousness and virtue. “Life consists in knowing of one’s past, living his present and believing in a better future.... It is in the self and in the service lays human life.”(59) avers the poet.

XIX Chapter **The Vanity of Life** sketches out the ebb and flow of life. Just like the dawn leads to dusk, the waxing and waning of the moon are part and parcel of life the emperor’s sovereign power is forced to contend with the harsh reality of life. The rhythmic lines are vibrant enough to convey that every cloud has a silver lining. The words ‘kingly powers,’ ‘princely towers,’ ‘power,’ ‘money in hand,’ ‘conqueror of the world,’ ‘country at command’ on the one hand and ‘mere vapors,’ ‘sojourner,’ ‘dark winter,’ ‘falling dry leaves,’ ‘death bed’ conceptualizes the inconsistent nature of life. The chapter ends with the confession of Alexander,

“What had I brought to the world
And what to take from the world?
Empty-handed I came
Empty-handed I go.” (62)

The lines are majestic. It relate the futility of life and prepare us to face the same. Whatever may be the religion the aforesaid concept befits everyone avows the poet. The rhythmic line that conveys the formulae for life is laconic but imposing. The comparison of ‘gay-summer’ to the sunny days of life and dark winter to the fading days, the juxtaposition of Alexander, the great, to Shahjahan are distinguishing features which are highly informative and portents that if a man’s acting in the drama of life ends, he has to go empty handed despite his wealthy state. Drawing inferences from diverse religions is another distinguishing feature.

In part XX titled **Introspection** the poet takes us to the prehistoric times. He upholds that every suffering opens the windows of self- analysis. Shahjahan’s suffering; his introspection, Ashoka’s Kalinga war, his repentance and will for penitence all are glittering facts of the past which makes us brood over the metamorphosis in the minds of the present corrupted politicians. If a positive change in Ashoka showed him the way for

Ahimsa why not a welcome change happen in our politicians to release the amassed wealth, wipe away inequality and poverty and gratify peace. Ofcourse many of our corrupted leaders too may be subjugated to posthumous execution, a fear of which would minimize sins in the world and bring forth the realization of the ephemeral nature of things belaboring the virtues of munificence, altruism and charity. Everyone has to nod head when Dr. Doss opines that our worship to god is blessing based because human wants are boundless.

Part XXI **Ethics** is a wonderful title of this chapter. But alas! Regretfully those have become the concepts of the bygone era. Shedding light on din- Ilahi, a common religion founded by Akbar, the mouthpiece of Shahjahan, Dr. Doss makes us crave to be the citizen of Akbar's kingship where human concern and political wisdom assured harmony and boom to his statesman.

“Keeping me on his lap
Used to teach me ethics.” (69)

Above lines remind the pathetic condition of the present nuclear families where the young generation hardly witness the love of grandparents and the precepts of moral values from them.

“All rivers run to ocean
And all roads meet at Rome
So the rulers must have vision
And look beyond horizon.”(70)

The lines bring to mind the professional skills like out of the box thinking, forethought, reverse thinking etc of the current era. The very word ‘flora and fauna’, Akbar's love for it and Shakespeare's lines unfold that nature is an open book and has volumes to convey to the present power-driven generation.

Next chapter **Reflections** is a blissful reminiscence reliving the juvenile age of Shahjahan and his hankering for the same. In an age where face book and video games are the sole companions to children, Shahjahan's boyhood in the thick of nature accompanied by friends and brothers, enriched by the tales of forefathers is a piece of good fortune. The usage of words such as ‘super-human stage,’ ‘Angelic hours,’ ‘Divine visitation,’ ‘hanging clouds,’ ‘beyond the clouds of human explanation’ to put out the emperor's rapture and rhapsodies about his childhood has so much to convey the poet's finesse and prowess in handling words.

XXIII chapter is titled as **Battles of Paniput**. It ventilates that how the heroic tales of the forefathers, left an indelible imprint, enforcing valiant spirits and infusing warrior like qualities in Shahjahan.

XXIV chapter **Of Children** is exclusively for children. It highlights the pride of owning grandchildren as an authority of inheritance and the grand children in turn are blessed to revel in the shelter and comfort of the grandparents. The very first line of the

chapter “Press not the little child” (78) picture the agony of the present school going children who are dumped in a cage called school with no outlet to their feelings. Quoting of the world poet Thiruvalluvar’s lines to fortify his point of view is a supplementary glory to this chapter.

In XXV chapter **Mourning** Shahjahan mourns the death of his dear son who is known for his virtues and morale. Power-thirst Aurangzeb, his ruthless demeanor towards his father and elder brother is heart-rending. Shahjahan’s love for his adorable daughter, his preference for daughters as his heir than sons comes into picture in this chapter.

The XXVI chapter **Repentance** is about Shahjahn’s memories of his past sins and his plead to seek refuge in the lap of god. Shahjahan’s betrayed state, his condition having been taken into custody by iniquity is reflected. A ball that’s thrown on a wall bounces back to the person thrown with the same force is the prevalent truth. Similar is the experience of Mughals. The pangs of dotage, clubbed with seclusion has dethroned the great emperor into a pit with the harbinger, “You reap what you sow.” It is no use to pray sun after blindness, repentance ofcourse is celebrated but the price that he has paid for his past sins is tragic. Quotes from AlQuran that celebrates the graciousness of god is commendable.

The XXVII chapter **Human Concern** opines the gospel truth of life. Shahjahan’s woe has opened him the doors to visualize the practical world destined with the doleful doldrums of life. The lines contrast the affluence of today’s politicians and professionals with the demeaning state of the present farmers, the backbone of our country. This is something that is serious and has not been worked out in the political framework of India right from the Mughal period till date. It is regretful that Shahjahan’s intuition and yearnings for a new form of government that meets out social justice to all has not been accomplished even after many years of his death.

XXVIII chapter **Preparation** intensifies the reunion of the lovers. No other lines could emphasize the strength and power of love than the ‘Song of Solomon’ quoted from the Bible. The breeze of Tajmahal too emanates the aura of love and makes an adult to crave for their partner. The bliss of being with the celestial mansion is so intense to Shahjahan that the thought of departure is excruciating and grim than dying.

Chapter XXIX takes the name **Parting**. Snapped affinity with the human Shahjahan’s departing days are a sad tale of gazing the tomb through the mirror from lying in the death bed and carrying its image to the immortal world inhabited by Mumtaz, the adorable queen of Shahjahan.

Chapter XXX is **Welcome**. It asserts the triumph of love over death. The adjectives “ ‘Golden gates,’ ‘dirty prison’, ‘pleasant paradise’, ‘immortal tale’,

‘melancholy songs’, ‘terrestrial world’, ‘celestial abode’, ‘rapturous melody’, ‘fatigued souls’” are grave and profound to intensify the dejected state of separation and the mirth of re-union. It is the zenith of imagination to ruminate death as a silent state of sleep and the rapturous melody of the nightingale that brings back the life and bestows a united life with no separation. Quote from Lord Byron’s **When we two Parted** strongly asserts the poet’s mastery in utilizing the right quote at the right time.

To encapsulate, the Poetic Monologue **Tajmahal the Monument of my Love** by Dr. T. Swamidoss published by Prabhu publications may not be considered as a mere paper in black and white as the delineation takes us to the heart and is sensuous. The poet’s dexterous skill, distinct craftsmanship, aesthetic sense, imagination, innovation and the brevity in the usage of simple but charged language of drafting verses bring the touch, taste and smell of his enriched poetic imagination. The verses are persuasive and picture the life of Shahjahan and Mumtaj in the mind’s eye. The artistic cover page with the glittering marble mahal in the background of blue feasts our vision. The price of the book is affordable. The thirty chapters focus exclusively on the history behind Tajmahal and prompt the reader to visit the same. The book will surely win the hearts of the manifold.

A Brief Note about the Writer

Dr. V. Sunitha presently works as Asst Professor in English at Sreenivasa Institute of Technology and Management Studies in Chittoor situated in Andhra Pradesh state, India. She has ten years of teaching experience and has 34 publications to her credit. Her poems, short stories, articles on English literature and English Language Teaching have been published in national and international journals. Her article titled, ‘Is it a School or Jail?’ published in The Hindu news paper won overwhelming acclamation. Her another article titled, “Where are our ethics?” has also been published on February 1, 2013 in The Hindu .She has made paper presentations in 13 national and international conferences. She has attended 13 training programmes and a member of 20 professional bodies. She can be reached at v.sunitha@rediffmail.com