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**K'nitin Sarma's "Diaries of Traveler and Madman's Song"****Reviewed By:****Syeda Shahzia Batool Naqvi**

Lahore, Pakistan

Article: A Critique of Poems

Volume: Diaries of Traveler &amp; Madman's Song

Poet: K' Nitin Sarma

Place of Birth: Kampur, Nagaon, Assam, India

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"Gazed into Him an amazed I at his knowing of mine...  
and he read to me some pages of my life which I used to believe I write in the ink of  
loneliness....  
And he read to me....  
I listened of myself'  
The Traveler and the Astrologer

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Writing an interpretation of one's poetry is as marvelous as the astrologer's reading of some hidden pages of the poet's life on his face to his own amazement. The meaning of the poem is the experience of the poet it expresses – that's why the idea in a poem is only a part of the total experience of life that it communicates. Therein lies the worth of the poem.

To extract the soul of the poet from his verses is difficult but scanning the poems of K' Nitin Sarma to search for his soul is a marvel because the persona of his poetic world bears varied characters, all as the extended shadows of the poet's multiple selves bearing the titles of a stranger, a wanderer, a traveler and a dreamer. All these shades of a personality have always been understood, admired and adopted by the symbolists and transcendentalists, as nothingness is always considered as a rich & well meaning state of mind.

K' Nitin is a prodigious wordsmith of India, whom the proud mother soil of Kampur, in the state of Assam claims as her son, still 22, but with the depth of expression and insight of vision. A regular reader of his poems might quickly guess the fact of his being a born traveler in search of the gems of life scattered everywhere in all places, moods and attitudes; a dreamer who pines away for the realization of his unfulfilled dreams though full of the sap of life.

He philosophizes the endurance of life as an eternal quest of a lost self;

"I started reading the book called life then....

So many times I tried, and so many times I failed however to understand it.... The journey had been going through

reaching, falling, wailing and starting ....”

One is tempted here to compare the poet to Stephen Dedalus the mirror image of James Joyce who continues his struggle in the same vein.

“To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!!!”

About the reason and the result of the search he has nothing to offer:

“I don’t know where I go next....

What turns into my last step...

That is why I am a traveler”

His characters drive the carriage of his existence on the axle tree of a centralized metaphor in the form of this analogy: Life is a journey, man is a traveler and the road is a constant companion leading from vague beginning to an unclear end of the unknown destination which seems unattainable because of the hurdles of life.

The volume “Diaries of a traveler and a Madman’s song” comprises poems of the same thread as the blend of hope and disillusionment; although there is a variety in tone, and moods for a conscious reader willing to drink the message to the dregs. There are the poems of metaphorical and paradoxical nature, about love in its tender shades, about natures, of desire to take flight, breaking away the fatal ties, of unfulfilled desires and incomplete aspirations.

Mathew Arnold remarks:

“Poetry is simply the most delightful and perfect form of utterance that human words can reach”.

Nitin’s poems are the product of that utterance which his heightened imagination could produce.

In his poem “Devotee of clay”, he expresses the estranged relations and gulf between God and his own chaotic self in these words:

“My god spoke to me but strange language

Now I wonder if he understood my prayers also or

So long I prayed and prayed in vain...

My god wrote to me but strange letters

now I wonder if he understood my poems also or

so long I wrote and wrote in vain...”

Such are the folds and layers of the self within, virgin and unknown to himself. He likes experimenting with human reactions to things that he never opens up his real self to people.

Being honest in expression is the best thing about him.

Just like the sun also rises after a tense clouded state, similarly we find the poet sometimes in a complete recognition of his amphibious existence. This element of confidence can be seen in the poem “I”:

“I am the son of my village...

I am born in the dreams of my father

and my childhood is his craft,

and garden of my mother's blooming  
so, often in my journey the fragrance  
of my village soil nourishes me  
the messages of mother hug me  
and I draw warmth".

The same string of self confidence and a touch of positivity is making the following lines so rich.  
"Cage me in the prison of the shores, make me walk in the trapped roads, pour upon / me the  
unforgiving rays of death / but beyond bounds with the tides of madman's soul I shall go on".  
"I shall go on"..

Another marked feature of his hand is the way of sensitizing the richness of a moment. His lines  
are packed with thought and the use of language is secular to his own natural experience. He says  
more, and says it more intensively than does any other writer of his age. In the poem "Journey or  
Stoppage he says:

"Ask me not and you would never  
but every disclosed side of a coin is a veil of the other.  
My smile could only come out in reply to your good byes.  
Ask me not what it veiled behind".

As soon as one grows with his poetic soul, the verses start opening up on the reader, and the  
clouds of ambiguity get clear away. No verse of the world is complete without love as the main  
spring of life. Nitin's work is no exception in this also. Though he cannot be labeled as a love  
poet, even then the passion of love has adorned his world as well. The state of love is the tender  
phase of innocence, kind, mild and gentle. This view will be endorsed at the reading of "After  
love."

"I hadn't learnt to walk then  
forgive me for not knowing how to hold your hands...  
To hug mine steps with yours....  
Forgive me for not knowing to read  
your dreams before your eyes wake up...  
I hadn't learnt how flowers bloom then  
forgive me forever."

His philosophy of love can be understood in another well meaning verse entitled "Love and  
thereafter", where he says:

"Life without unfound love  
is but a life in itself unfound  
and what have you cheered in love if not its pains  
love is a way not to your lover but  
into your own self".

The poem “She and he (one day somewhere) reflects the faculty of dramatizing in a poetic way,. It is a verse drama and a study in disillusionment about clash of opinions and conflict of characters of the lovers. The scene cannot be explained but felt:

“We have differences she said  
He - even twins have ... roses & thorns too have  
But since times unknown they have been lovers  
She – you write’ yourself... I do not know poems  
He – only thing about my poems I feel is they can never be known ....  
She – I do not even understand  
He – if anything is ever meant to be understood, it’s not a poem....”

In his own words, K’Nitin views life as a teacher and a nurse: “ I am not what I was yesterday, you shall find me not the same on the morrow.... For long ago, I had realized even death is not a halt and if we can do nothing, even then we must keep moving at least. Poetry thus has been to me like an observation of this vastness of life, one morning we met beside the shore of the mighty river of our land, and one night we sat in the hill top and drank moonlight”. The same is the consciousness that urges him to think

“Where shall I go and where I come from I must know”.

The style of versification and stanza form is almost consistent. The poems are written in free verse with inherent unlearned rhythm, and rhetorical diction. The work stands unmatched by the use of the running metaphor mixed with the flowing wisdom:

“wonder cannot have an accent  
as fragrance cannot have definition  
There’s a reflection in the east window pane  
Where sun sets with the same beauty of death  
Walking through a melancholy  
That is invisible,  
Rain cannot have a color”  
August Lanes

One of the major influences on K’Nitin’s poetic sensibility is the great poet Atanu Bhattacharya whom he holds in great esteem in the heart, and whose celebrated poem “Bohu Manuhor Majot” he has translated into English, and not it’s the high time that he himself deserves these lines:

“Among many you are a little different  
you, though sit in darkness and think about hour bright

You fill yourself with faith

That rays of light shall soon bath even the smallest corners of dark....  
Due to such oneness of yours you deserve to be followed  
You deserve to be understood....  
You deserve to be asked that  
What still keeps alive the human in you  
In this desert of inhumanity.”

Diaries of traveler and Madman’s song is a book about life and the enigma of human bonding, it is a product of a sensible mind of a precocious poet who is gifted with the art of shifting potentiality to actuality. Stephen covey in his best seller gave his precious words: “All children are born genius but they are gradually degeniusized by their surroundings” but K’nitin is one of those lucky fellows who keep their genius intact throughout their existence. In the journey from darkness to light wishing him all the best.