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*The Criterion*



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## Plagued by Earthquake

Aju Mukhopadhyay

A seismic disturbance measuring 7.9 on Richter scale  
shook Nepal on 25 April 2015, spreading wide and far  
from the epicenter;

tremors felt up to a fortnight and still raked.

Mud houses crashed, big houses sank and cracked  
towers brought down, living beings buried underground  
killing humans more than eight thousand  
besides animals, injuring double the numbers;  
householders became refugees in utter humiliation,  
reminiscent of the recent catastrophe in Uttarakhand  
and this after a decade long Maoist destruction.

On a recent sojourn to Nepal awhile  
we found rolling stones on roads, solid and fragile,  
hilly dust with pebbles flowing through the thoroughfare;  
the country seemed ready to bear the vagaries of Nature  
without disclosing it to its happy dwellers.

Mighty Himalayas in geological stress  
with moving crust plates stay fixed for ages  
but move subtly in stages.

Plagued by earthquake  
part of Kathmandu has risen with a giant shake  
and Mount Everest has shrunk slightly by jerk.

The misfortune of Nepal we suffer  
for a country contiguous to our border  
and we invoke divine blessings for the neighbor.  
Timely help by Indians and all sympathizers

has surpassed the need of the hour  
though human loss cannot be made up  
those who have gone will never wake up.

Remembering that grief and sorrow like joy and happiness  
are always a passing phase  
Nepalese have to rise up the changed world to face.

It is pleasant to live surrounded by mountains and seas  
but dangerous to forget that Nature is unbound and free;  
to build houses on mountain or taint the river and sea  
never helps us to go scot free.

It is repeated elsewhere in recent time throughout the globe  
as a puzzle from Mother Earth to all her children to solve.