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Review of Rajiv Kandelwal's "Dwelling with Denial" (Poems)

Book: Dwelling with Denial (Poems) First Print: 2020

Poet: Rajiv Khandelwal

ISBN: 978-93-89213-19-5

Published by: The Poetry Society of India, Gurugram, --122-002, Haryana, India.

Reviewed by:

Julia Devardhi

Principal, Nalanda Educational Institutions

Hyderabad.

Rajiv Kandelwal's melange of poetry commences with his implicit faith in God and reveals his absolute surrender to the cosmic power that is the beacon for all humanity (Petition). His collection of 75 poems is an amalgamation of themes that capture the attention of the reader. A wide variety of thoughts that spawn the mindscape of the poet are projected before the eyes of the reader who is drawn into the vortex of meaning expressed in apt vocabulary. The mood and tone of each poem is exquisite and compel the reader to experience the roller-coaster ride of emotions and mood swings of the poet and his brainchild, his poetry ---"Dealing With Denial". The title is appropriate since the variety of emotions, wrapped up in his poems clearly indicate that we human beings sometimes turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to our innermost feelings. The unpredictability and hypocritical nature of the world around us is sensitively expressed in the magnificent diction the poet chooses to use.

This collection of poems reminds us of the age of literary experimentation and of E. E. Cummings' poetry that emphasizes different moods such as satirical, tender, sensual, whimsical and tough. A few of Rajiv Kandelwal's poems follow the style of Pattern Poetry, wherein the typography or lines are arranged in an unusual configuration to convey or extend the emotional content of the lexis and taxis (words and their specific arrangement). The last lines of "Unfinished Business" appear as:

Whose answers

Lie

Blocked
Unmined

These single words used as individual lines capture the imagination and force the reader to fathom the meaning sequestered in the constellation of words used. Another feature of 'Refrain' used in "Wandering Thoughts" sets the tone of emphasis, for example:

As always
When I am alone
And my thoughts
Wander

The reiteration of these lines (3 times) in the poem depicts the wandering mood that carry the poet and the reader into worlds that need to be further explored. Next, the single line used as a stanza "Creativity at its best" in the poem "Critical Comments" reveals the poet's brevity of thought. The exceptional use of vocabulary portrays the ecstatic, exhilarating, aesthetic sensuality, frustrating feelings, thoughtfulness and a myriad of other human emotions.

A few of his poems are down to earth portrayals of the common man's life in a debt-ridden society ---their anguish and despondency are revealed in the phrase "economic echoes", rightly understood as "economic woes". The debt trap, a "vicious circle" surrounds them and the reader perceives them in their own web of misery. Simultaneously, the poet unveils the veiled generosity of people who donate "substantial sum/ In homage to deities" ---but are cruelly insensitive to the thirsty children as they belong to the under-privileged strata of society. The poet aptly terms this as "social apartheid" in his poem "Guilty". A thorough perusal of such poems opens our mind to a "Fractured Reality" that permeates the world around us.

Despite the profound, thought-provoking poetry, the reader is transported into a realm that resonates with the sound of verbal music that flows freely in his free style of writing. This indicates the poet's deep yearning for a life free from the shackles imposed by Destiny. The sensuality and sensuousness embedded in his poems are two unique qualities that make his poetry delicious and delightful to our senses. The "amorous" undertones are felt through

the word “Oxytocin”—the ‘love hormone’ or the ‘cuddle hormone’ (Pleading In A Dubai Club and A Dilemma). The poem “Union” (part I and II) is a scenic description of “Love is in the air”. The “contagious smile” and the “Duchenne smile” speak for themselves.

Contrary to the romantic appeal, is the poet’s patriotic fervour in the “To the Pilots who visited Balakot”, “In God We Trust”, and a few more that reveal the poet’s love for humanity and his deep concern to maintain a “Utopian Ideology” and thus spread the message of love and peace. This can be viewed as the poet’s individual contribution towards maintaining the legacy of universal peace.

The poetic diction is overwhelmingly exotic and exudes a freshness that blankets the reader’s mind with “fevered fantasies”. Hot and cold winds of understanding flood the reader’s consciousness as the chosen words “swirl in shadows” that are used with ‘poetic abandon’ that flush our minds with irresistible passion spinning us away into the “misty cosmos” (quote from one of his poems). The mind and hands that penned these exquisite poems remind us of the unquenchable emotive energy of the poet, himself.

A perfect poem captures
When thoughts are fleshed out
Considered
Re-considered
Crafted.
(Poem in the Being)

In this collection of poems, poetry assumes a splendid stature of being aesthetic, romantic, sensual, didactic and prophetic. Poetry in the hands of this versatile poet mesmerizes and wields its magic over the reader propelling him or her into an intellectual space.

This Review is a tribute to Rajiv Kandelwal who can be truly acclaimed a prolific and resourceful writer. “Happy Reading!”