

Book Review: Neelam Saxena Chandra's *Silhouette of Reflections*

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There is a golden saying that you don't see things as they are, rather, you see things as you are. Everyman perceives life from his own vision, and poetry is the chronicle of all that a poet conceives with his imagination, observation and intense experiences with life, and the value of his poems depends upon the depth and the range of his inner thought-streams, the same thought-process to which Neelam Chandra Saxena artistically entitles as "Silhouettes of Reflections." In the words of S.T. Coleridge: "The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflections on the acts of the mind itself." A silhouette is generally known as a drawing consisting of the outline of something especially a human profile, filled in with a solid color. Here the volume of poems *Silhouette of Reflections* focuses upon the contours of human life in general, and it is richly presented in solid emotions. It can be called a poetic passage through Life and Nature, a record of life with an ennobled vision of a passionate expression in a lucid diction along with a sanguinary feel of the poet who possesses delicate nerves with a fine apprehension of Beauty.

The volume, "Silhouette of Reflections" comprises 175 poems of a variety of themes concerning life i.e. hope, pain, pleasure, nature, colors and beauty. These are the governing powers of the human world with a serene approach., at least that's how she has conceived the world. The world of the poems manifests itself upon the reader by a poem, "A Cycle of Mystic Charm", where the poet feels herself getting mingled with the magical milieu, holy and happy, mystic and merry. This poem sets the mood for this pleasant poetic journey with the fine images of cheery clouds, joyful raindrops, a mystic touch of bliss and her own exultant existence. The very next poem, "A New Hope" carries forward the same tone, and here that exultant essence experiences some unspeakable happiness with the lesson of contentment in the form of a new hope. The essential thing is the poet's bond with the forces of Nature. The poem, "Angels" plays a delicate role to enhance the atmosphere of purity in this world. Angels are the objects of her clear vision of an ideal world, as she says:

"Angels

are the pretty creatures

who appear in life

like a magical breeze

soaking everyone around

in happiness and sanguinity.”

This poem reverberates a poem, “Aire and Angells” by John Donne: “ So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame,

Angells affect us oft, and worship’d be...

Some lovely glorious nothing I did see.” Angels can be likened to those individual beings who share the sufferings of other fellows and in whose eyes they can’t see the tears, such human beings are the builders of a strong society and a great nation in her vision.

There are many poems in the volume under the title of Life dealing with the various aspects of this mundane existence on the earth. In a poem, “A Book Called Life”, the poet handles the greatest abstract reality called Life in its concrete existence using metaphor of a book, the book penned down by the Author of Fate. The color symbolism weaves the texture of the main theme, and the gray color completes the world of the other colors. In another poem, “A Train Called Life”, Neelam presents an analogy of life as a journey of train under the shadows of Time, and see what the blind to fate human beings are doing here:

“Life is but a train

And we are all the babbling passengers

Who keep jabbering, prattling, gibbering

Without realizing that our destinies are in the hands of one driver-

HIM!!!”.

The other poems on life are “Life and Electricity”, “Life”, “Life- A Maze”, “What is Life?” etc. Neelam is the poet of Life in all shades of humors-sanguinary, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric, covering the feelings of cheerfulness, sadness, coldness, anger, grief etc. respectively. In a beautiful poem, “On Cloud Nine”, she expresses herself in these tender words:

“Poetic songs,

That is where my soul belongs;

The flowing words keep me mesmerized,

The pacifying verses keep me mystified

.....

Happiness pours like rain,

Ecstasy gushes in my veins..." On another occasion of poetic rumination she connects a different feeling in "My Sorrow":

"I dribbled
all my sorrow
drop by drop
on a piece of paper
converting it
into words
and named it
poetry."

It is rightly said that wit and poetry exist side by side, each irradiating the other. Neelam is aware of this fact quite impulsively, as she is a natural artist and composer of verses. She makes the most lucid and precise use of the poetic diction, exploiting all of the resources of the proper lexicon in order to convey her meaning and message to the eager reader through the poems. Her poems are imbued with the spirit of Nature, and her style of diction varies according to the ends she wishes to achieve. She focuses on diction according to the nature of the style, the subject and the literary form, as we see in "The world of Delusion":

"My thoughts are busy
Weaving a wondrous world
...
I know that this world is a fantasy
Of my imagination, and is an illusion
Which will soon cede from its trance...
But I am happy to stay

In that world of delusion." This delusion is something imaginary and wishful showing her outlook on life. Her poem "Masking" is quite readable for this very reason. Her poems are composed as a reflection of life from the point of view of either the poet, or of the character/s that she is trying to portray. Neelam's is consistent as far as the form of poetry is concerned,

which is mostly the French vers libre i.e. the Free-verse form, allowing the poet to express herself without getting restricted in rhyme and meter. This form quite suits her freedom loving spirit which is not “ready to be thwarted”, though she dexterously manages the harmony of thoughts and beats of the rhythm, accompanied by the figurative aspects like alliteration, wit, the run-on-line, the imagery and metaphors etc.

The volume is a studded book of rich poems with a passion of life, and a much sought for vibrant pleasure and emotional relief, and it does not mean that her writing does not deal with fever and fret of life. It does, but she has an attitude that sermonizes pleasantly as if to say, yes, all will be fine. I enjoyed reading Neelam’s poetry for the reflection of profound thoughts of robust optimism and substantially positive outlook on life.