

## POETRY

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Dr. K.V. Raghupathi

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### **Images of the River of Maternal Salvation**

I

Surrounded by boulders and steep brown rocks scattered  
with broken snow in the rising white hills to the blue sky  
the glacier melts like butter in the pan  
here, at Gaumukh  
from the formless unmanifested to matted locks emerges  
majestic Bhagirathi that toddles and stumbles  
then grows like a child  
plays down with fun and joy  
floating, jumping, tumbling, and somersaulting;  
then buoyant like youth, merrymaking  
trundles and roars like an adult  
flows boisterous with force  
bursting through the valleys excited  
undefiled and unquiet  
to join Alaknanda to become the mighty sublime Ganges  
on the plains as a river of creation and abundance.

Her grandiose ever shining flowing ceaselessly, gurgling  
from past to the present; and the present to the future  
like the innocence of the steamy life wellsprings  
with eternal freedom  
and the *dharma* on her back  
through eleven states the time of change  
by gravity and grace  
the epic journey joining the quiet ocean!

## II

When I was young unripen  
passing through the days of undeveloped technology  
I dreamt of her awesome flow in the infinite time  
heavily loaded with visual images on my eyelashes,  
impulsive and impatient,  
I carried on cherishing now and then  
until the day I landed on her bosom forty summers later  
striding on the sand with footprints  
receding in the waters,  
my joy knew no boundaries  
exalted as the flow strutted and swayed  
in my consciousness stretching like the river bed.

Now I am older  
and life is hanging on a tender hook  
with time in sight beckoning,  
I long to go adventurous  
riding the waves of my visuals I captured and cherished  
into timeless future.

### III

Manikarnika!

The name shudders for its dangerous death factory  
and transports to mythical worlds of the ancient lore.  
To bathe is to purify the sins of the soul of several births,  
but to die in her lap is to gain maternal salvation.

What has been burning since the dawn of time?

Everything is burning!

What is burning?

The mind is burning.

What is burning?

The body is burning.

What is burning?

The greed is burning.

What is burning?

The anger is burning.

What is burning?

The ignorance is burning.

What is burning?

The desire to know is burning.

Everything within is burning

like the forest burning.

From the ashes the new sprouts

like a thousand dancing Sivas!

#### IV

I stand on the steps, watching long  
the endless winding majestic murky river  
babbling and chattering  
with faded patterned garlands flowing,  
like the unburnt desires.

I am not seen, but the shadow bursts forth  
I am not heard, but the voice floats  
I am not singing, but the music flows  
so loud as it reaches farther. It is all me;  
the river is my consciousness  
ever-expanding like the eastern sky.

#### V

Dawn to dusk, dusk to dawn  
the river pulsates with men, women, and children  
dipping half-naked  
with the sins, blackening down her gleaming flesh.  
She does not protest because she has no speech;  
she does not complain because she has no hatred.  
When men and women throw dirt and defecate  
she laps and licks the brown skin and the rocky steps  
crazy with joy as the blackbirds fill the air  
and takes no heed of the sun and the storm  
as they burst the sky and her chest and flanks.

**VI**

If there is a river  
that murmurs and babbles into eddying bays  
like little chicks  
bright as yellow metal  
with summer sun falling  
more faithful than the uncertain rains  
brimming with joy;

if there is a river  
that flows through the spiritual heart  
more ferocious, yet mellifluous  
like the vibrations of the flute  
with autumn wind whimpering  
than the forest tigers roaring;

if there is a river  
that braves the winter wind  
more with the surging passion  
to create and uncreate  
her images on her silken flow;

if there is a river  
that cuts through the rain and rage  
more ancient than the ancient scriptures,  
mythical gods and goddesses  
more powerful than the wild thunder;

if there is a river  
venerated much more on earth,  
it is the river Ganges;  
pray that she flows ever  
through the cosmic consciousness  
beautiful and faithful  
before loomed into a river of death!

### About the Poet

A former academic, born in 1957 in a Telugu speaking family in Andhra Pradesh, K.V. Raghupathi, holds a Ph.D. in English Literature and writes in English. Poet, novelist, short story writer, and critic, he has so far published thirty books. His first passion is poetry. Began writing seriously in the early 1980s. Since then, he has published thirteen poetry collections, two novels, and two short story collections besides edited eight critical works and six books on Yoga spanning over four decades of journey through writings. His poetry collections include *Desert Blooms* (1987), *Echoes Silent* (1988), *The Images of a Growing Dying City* (1989), *Small reflections* (2000), *Samarpana* (2006), *Voice of the Valley* (2006, 2014), *Wisdom of the Peepal Tree* (2006, 2014) *Dispersed Symphonies* (2010), *Orphan and Other Poems* (2010), *Between Me and the Babe* (2014), *On and Beyond the Surface* (2018), *The Mountain is Calling...* (2018), and *Transition* (2022). His poetry is endowed with rich and dense philosophy, mystical/transcendental thoughts, romantic elements, and imagery comprising similes, metaphors, personifications, apostrophe, irony, climax, anti-climax, and full of rhetoric and symbols. His two novels are *The Invalid* (2012) and *The Disappointed* (2014); his short fiction includes: *The Untouchable Piglet* (2015) and *A Gay and a Straight Woman* (2017). His poems and short stories, besides thought-provoking and stimulating scholarly papers, have appeared in various newspapers like *The Hindu*, *The Statesman*, Print journals, and online journals. He lives in Tirupati, AP and he can be reached at Email: [drkvraghupathi9@gmail.com](mailto:drkvraghupathi9@gmail.com)