

POETRY

Dr. K.V. Raghupathi

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