

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Unique Freshness Beacons

P C K Prem

*Waves of Imagination*

Sagar Mal Gupta

YKING BOOKS

Price: Rs.400.00

*Waves of Imagination*, a collection of poems uplifts and motivates. Every heart is a poet if a man understands that he is ever young and fresh within then life can mean a lot, Dr Sagar Mal Gupta proves it. A widely published poet as he is, comes out with four anthologies of poetry one after the other after he says goodbye to a distinguished and impressive academic career of teaching. A casual look at his poetry exhibits immense faith in man despite turmoil around. It seems tremendous struggle in the mind with a kindly heart for humankind must be the rationale to come up after deliberating over the destiny of man and society and share his concerns with a sense of involvement. He appears inconspicuous when he writes with intensity and reveals unique shades of truth that disturb but also provoke one to reflect over the mystical movement of providence.

A trilingual writer is a student of Edinburgh University, UK, who earned his Ph. D in Linguistics from the University of Hawaii, US. With an experience of fifty-six years of teaching English Literature, ELT and Communication at colleges and Universities, now, a

retired man, he lives at Jaipur. Interestingly, he develops love for poetry after he crosses seventy-five years of age, and astonishes when the muse almost becomes lethargic for many. He is a widely published poet who appears in various journals of national and international repute. He has three collections of poems namely—*The Crescent Moon* 2018 (Yking Books, Jaipur), *The Songs of India and the World* 2019 and *The Songs of Rajasthan and Other Poems*, 2020 (Prakash Book Depot, Bareilly). Now, at eighty-two, when one talks to him, there is extraordinary energy, enthusiasm and buoyancy in his resounding voice.

His heart is with the suffering and the victimized for many reasons, and feels sentimentally attached to those deprived of customary life amidst torched cultural construction when he thinks over the plight of people of Afghanistan, who are victims of their own fellow citizens, the Taliban, the tribal people. We were witnesses to the happenings and its systematic chilling lack of warmth in emotions, empathy, relations, values and love. The compatriots turned the worst enemy as the Afghani men and women faced agonizing time and ran about to save life. Women became the victims of heartlessness, butchered condolences and strained disruption and disgrace in human bonds. The poignant depiction of an Afghan refugee girl touches a sensitive heart. Nearly six verses portray the existing miseries of innocent people the Taliban cause sans mercy, for the fulfilment of ulterior motifs in the name of religious vehemence and intolerance without taking care of the welfare of people. He talks of bodged cultural heritage. His poem on a Gajani school is an example of ruined future one can imagine as one observes the damaged building. Afghan Women's prayer touches deeply a sensitive human heart –

You live in peace  
Let us live in peace  
and let the whole world  
live in peace

free from peddlers  
of terrorism and violence.  
Listen to the *azaan*  
and be a messenger of ahinsa and peace (*A Prayer by Afghan Women 6*)

Violence is not a solution to any problem. One is dumbfounded to see the courage and fortitude of the Ukrainian people, who fight for protecting the country but remain steadfast and fearless in the face of uncalled for attack on the country. He says in very passionate and appropriate poetic lines –

A merciless aggressor can conquer a territory  
through force and violence  
But win over the hearts of the people  
With a far evolved approach that can come with  
Knowledge, compassion and empathy. (*Ukrainian War Heroes 8*)

He makes simple observations but these challenge the vicious and the war hungry mindset of people, who do not want peace to prevail since dim-witted chauvinistic propensities barge-in and overshadow, whatever may be the reasons.

Poet notices how people ignore course grain like bajra and jawar that act as a panacea for all diseases, and therefore, advocates use of millets. A man ought to take life as it comes and understand that ‘sorrows’ occur every day but moments of joy are rare. However, time of happiness definitely comes. A man should learn to ‘live in the present /Enjoy the ocean as its wont.’ He eagerly observes each incident around and deeply studies the conduct of contemporary man, who has no time to ‘stand and stare’ and enjoy what ‘nature nay life’ offers to him. He believes that one ought to keep pace with the current times. Everyone is in a hurry

and speed determines the essence of life, and therefore, ruins valued existence in the same way, he opines in 'Speed is Normal.'

They believe speed is success

though they do not know

what speed is doing

To their bodies, mind and soul 19

Imagination works amazingly and even surprises the man, who indulges in the pleasure of imaginings, only the poet knows. A positive attitude is always encouraging. Nature and its world, has its own way of moving ahead. Nature exists for man and society, and provides everything that a man needs ('What Humans Cannot Give, Trees Give' 20). Perhaps, poet is aware of an ancient king Prithu, who for the wellbeing of man and society got everything from the earth and a modern man is not an exception. However, now his appetite is unappeasable.

It happens with a small boy he reminds, who wanted to eat jamuns but failed to climb or procure otherwise, for he was too small. A bird sitting on the branch of a tree continued to look at him, and possibly understood the little boy's intense yearnings, so it dropped some jamuns, and the boy was happy. 'India's Identity 23' makes one laugh that in utter confusion and chaos here exists a certain prototype that glorifies Indians and their love of total freedom sans any barriers, when the poet portrays the traffic on the roads. 'Wall of Tears 24' describes the departure of a girl as a bride to her in-laws with immense kindness.

During the days of Corona, monuments of attraction all over the world lost the old acclaimed glory and splendour as no one ever admired the architectural beauty and marvel of man's hands. Such observations speak of poet's sense of insightful observations. How the uncertainty of living caused fears of death so near when many lost lives. His poem on a Corona patient appears realistic and yet incredible. Again one observes that 'Juicy Loot' and 'Abundita' are also about the indiscriminate loot during Corona days when the vulnerable

suffered because there was disappointing control over the worsening situation as a man thought “Money is omnipotent/ with power and pelf/ omnipotent and omniscient/ like God 61.”

Poet Sagar Mal Gupta does not boast of a great philosophy apparently but down deep in every word he writes, he hides a great message to man. He is realistic, dreamy, philosophic and religious and at the same time, he appears as a social scientist with the exterior of a political man! He looks after many intellects he houses inside him. A simple object one usually ignores turns out a philosopher for him. Poet’s strength lies in finding beauty and virtues even in anguish and agony, and counsels that one ought to locate areas of essence in everything and out to recognise and understand the harsh truth that life is transient. He writes on subjects hitherto not attempted so intimately and whatever the entity living or dead he takes up, is wide awake in his verses in living form as if. To him, poetry exists in the body frame of the entire creation.

Just look at the lines and find out what he conveys in absolute simplicity –

There is poetry in every nook and corner,

Of the village, of the town

Of the city, of the country

Of the world, of the galaxy. (*Poetry is Ubiquitous* 31)

The whole construction of various objects that a man notices around and envisions beyond is poetry, and in each creation, one can find many springs of philosophy and spiritual revelations. ‘A Daughter’s Wish’ is fascinating and philosophic. Does one ever hear to what a little daughter says? Know ‘Yellow Leaves, A Painter, Injustice, Divine Love and many other short lyrics. In pragmatic approach to life, the poet writes and makes a statement on life, and its negligible worries and anxieties, for if one ignores these inevitable hurdles in life, time opens up gates of indescribable joys he conveys. Encounters with people, places and simple incidents are not

without context in the scheme of god, the invisible force. They exist for joy abundant and as teachers of men also, for he finds nothing without an objective.

‘Mother: A Series of Vibrations 66’ speaks of a woman as ‘a personification of sacrifice /an icon of love and affection /an idol of constant care/a abdicator of her own aspirations...’ and ‘a liberal provider/ of car, concerns and blessings/ like goddess Durga.’ These lines speak of faith and confidence in a woman who is a mother, a symbol of goddess. He speaks about the dimensions of love. It is surrendering of mind, heart, and synthesis of inner emotional expansion with a rare openness in a spirit of consciousness and meditation and tells that love demands nothing but it requires that one should look after the body, for it nourishes ‘the soul’ of everyone. Though very simple, yet in ‘Borders 50’ he tells that a man has created walls of culture, religion and racism, difficult to bulldoze whereas somewhere else he opines in unforgiving words that democracy has lost its old meaning and glory, ‘in the present day/ democratic dispensation Whither Democracy 53.’

Human relationship depends upon mutual trust, reverence and perception of togetherness. He is sorry for the poor performance of consecutive governments, which never care for the man, who strengthens the system and the executive apparatus. He hints at the lack of pragmatism, which has resulted in poor management and increasing incidence of hunger. The situation is impassive and the worst as ever. Even after more than three-quarters of a century, many do not live a good life. Rulers have not done adequate for the comforts of the people false manifestoes and guarantees apart. The truth is that the poet is an academician who raises issues concerning ordinary man with passion and fervour but nothing materializes.

I feel poet’s ability to find meaning in otherwise ignorable situations is tremendous. Rarely, one finds a sense of acuity and judgement even on the surface without diving deep. ‘Simplicity versus Cleverness 69’ and ‘...versus Frugality 98’, offer meanings at the incompatible situational levels but the two interpret man’s psychosomatic makeup and nature

of behaviour. Such kinds of mystifying but obvious constructions convey poet's expertise in simplicity and humility while employing and saying serious words, and conveying terse messages self-effacingly. He awakens us to the social realities with compassion, warmth and love.

'That Maid Servant 103' not only makes obvious care and fondness for the work but it tells how to worship work. Her gesture is adorable when she before going home, '...bows to the floor, / pots and pans and bade good bye to meet again.' Again, in 'Rakshabandhan for Daily Workers 104' he speaks about the glory, magnificence and exhibition of love between the brothers and sisters and the day is almost a festival when everyone particularly the brother and the sisters are in new, elegant and brilliant dresses. However, on the other hand, for the workers, who do their routine odd jobs do not celebrate the occasion so brilliantly but enjoy working as usual because for them every day is day of festival, and it perhaps offers satisfaction and realization, and so they without a word fulfil their social obligations.

He returns to the festival and underlines the lament and melancholy of girls who do not have brothers and so the fear of predators always haunts but when they decide to tie Rakhi to the tree, it gives unique satisfaction. Tree –a symbol of nature, gives 'cool and fresh air' and the relationship with nature gives joy abundant and thus, he hides a great message.

A Raksha Sutra is not  
 merely a thread  
 but a symbol of love, sacrifice and responsibility.  
 In India, every festival  
 is first a festival of feelings  
 and then a festival of celebration. (*Rakshabandhan* 121)

He overwhelms with scary optimism even in old age. His poems take sudden twists and tell man that even if he has lost somewhat still he will find enough to sustain life. Well, even if the

body appears done up in old age, one holds a treasure of rich thoughts, and can contemplate on the present destiny of man as if a sphinx, stirring fright and profundity of what could be, and that is the spirit of living objectively with ‘debility, lassitude and tiredness’ and yet can ‘illumine the whole world.’

He is simple but intricate in thought, swift in change of mood and abrupt in reacting to challenging situations, and extracts mines of fresh and exciting thoughts imbued with passionate feelings of full-grown youth and reflective old age. Multitude of mix-up of sensations, judgments and infatuation creates an aura around him and that stays as his strength. Absolutely, a new brand of poetry where nothing appears obsolete and still a feeling travels that ancient wisdom haunts the poet and indirectly awakens man to go back and enjoy the treasure of pristine glory in understanding and revelation.

### **About the Author**

P C K Prem, an author of more than sixty books (English and Hindi) is a poet, novelist, short story writer and a critic in English and Hindi from Himachal, India.