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REVIEW ARTICLE ON K.V.RAGHUPATHI'S *BETWEEN ME AND THE BABE*

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ABSTRACT

Literature is not only meant to put across one's creativity, resourcefulness and eulogize pulchritude but also to expound the angst and shape the wrong and the naked in the society. Dr. K.V. Raghupathi has achieved a remarkable place in the history of English literature. His collection *Between Me and the Babe* is introspective and mission oriented. It sparks off the mindset of the multifarious and is a ray of hope. The poems proclaim the poet's anguish on the happenings in the society. His succinct lines express lofty ideas and aspire to instill values. The poems besides idolize nature, its splendor, vulnerability and the obligation to conserve it for human's survival. The bard possesses astounding and exceptional acumen. His adeptness of relating the quotidian in stunning and spectacular manner and his solicitude for the society incontrovertibly elevate him as a doyen among the contemporaneous bards. The paper seeks to review the ideology behind the prominent verses of the eminent poet and affirm his consideration for the fellow beings.

Key words- K. V. Raghupathi, Review Article, morale, Social Consciousness, Ethical values, philosophy, poems, wisdom, Between Me and the Babe

Introduction

K. V. Raghupathi is an acclaimed professor, a poet, short story writer, novelist, critic, book reviewer. His poems provide food for thought. He is an aesthete who wallows in the winsome of the natural world. He is adept in rejigging the various events happening around him in verse form. Behind his every gesture there lies a grave notion of bringing to the forefront the contemporaneous plight and moral values to the current cohort.

Raghupathi's poem "Accident" (22) is autobiographical. The poem communicates his attitude to life in the face of the *Welt-schmerz* and bleakness. Accident is an evil eye, plague leaving

indelible pang throughout. It happens when things go beyond control and is stamped unfortunate. But the poet gives a new twist and projects positive, a flip side to the flop of the gruesome, tear-jerking incident that happened in his life. The first line corroborates him as a Pollyanna. It starts with the conviction, "Once awoke, I found" (22). Being awake is a manifestation of vigilance, and capability to redeem and reconcile rather than to be deluged by cynicism.

His experiences on the bed in the ward are interspersed with similes: "The saline bottle/hanging on my right shoulder above/like a gourd staring at me"; "fears that gathered are like thick black clouds/with their windy words that flew like paper

flowers"; visitors "came and left like wedding guests" (22). The poet gives human form to the saline bottle. A mother feeds the child as a sign of endearment that enables the blood and energy to transform into milk. When the saline bottle epitomizes mother to the poet, it is to endorse his belief and optimism.

The poet's purport in commenting on the visitors as wedding guests is to make transparent the purposelessness of their casual visit. They visit the hospital as a duty; their windy words are like paper flowers which cannot last long as it offers only lip service.

"Bleeding face," "twisted muscles," "sub-located bone" would certainly cause twinge and trepidation. The backdrop is unnerving, causing butterflies to run in the stomach. But the smart poet educates us to receive grief with glad face, as there is greenery on the other side of the fence.

Thank god I only said in utter gratitude
the accident picked me up
and spared my life. (23)

It calls for courage to look at the odds against us. But the poet with his coruscating wit not only keeps the wolf from the door but also gets clued up and bruits about creed through his pen. He says, "But my lucky bones are left unfractured due to my past *karmas*" (23). It underscores the ethical values which would consecrate virtue until the cows come home.

The tragedy of life
is not meeting death, I learnt.
But coping with 'accident'
That has become warping of modern
human life.
It is cursory will that needs
Unflinching will to accept it
Then you grow and live with life. (23)

A sword can only create bloodshed, tears and throes. But poet Raghupathi's biro is brimming with buoyancy to replenish with oodles of vitality

and vivacity. It is not that how the poet is on the skids; it is that how he weathers the storm and retaliates vicissitude. The bard stirs up the gazillions through his word and deed and this phenomenal peerless quality makes him the more commendable.

It is no time to contemplate more
on life but meditate more
to slip into transcendental bliss that is all.
(24)

The poet perceives "...a renewed life/ A boon bestowed on me" (23) after accident. In this world of gadgets, multifarious things would give a buzz and pep us up but only a trailblazer like Raghupathi can lay bare the track to attain transcendental bliss.

"Broken Heart" is an edifying poem that urges to enlighten the self. Contemporary academics inculcate skills to fit into the mold called job, but little insight is thrown on self, as something that gives us the blues. Accentuating the role of self Raghupathi briefs,

Our interiors of body are never enlightened
But the interiors of temples and cupboards
Are filled with images surrounded by
camphor and jack-sticks (36)

The poem also points out that idol worship and the pomp and show of the rituals that are practiced in the name of god are commercial. Real prayer should enrich the self. Thus the broken heart requires self-appraisal to fasten it. It is worthy to note Lao Tse's quote,

He who knows other is learned
He who knows himself is wise.
and Marcus Auralius' quote,
"Look within for within is the well spring of
virtue".

The poem "Co-tenants" is a tribute to the extinct little sparrows on the occasion of world sparrows' day. It is a heartwarming poem that thwacks at everyone's moral sense to save birds, the need of the hour. Man, a victim to the fast paced life, could spare scant thoughts on what is

happening to birds and animals on the planet. Raghupathi through his observation pleads for saving the birds, the winged angels and the messengers of the incredible. The splendor of cell phones has engendered in the dwindling of the cherubic angels' populace. It is egregious that we have a whale of a time and the innocuous warblers have to sustain to ease and bask us in cell phones. It is this betrayed state the poet wishes to relay. It is acerbic to note that,

Two little sparrows in two little mirrors

Calling the images to join their dwindling community
In the growing dying cities. (31)

The phrase 'Growing dying' is a repository that calls forth remarks. They both vie with each other, standing on different poles. Growth is not the appropriate adjective to dying. The meaning is as clear as day. The upswing is not synonymous with blooming or proliferation. It is an augmentation that bulldozes humanity to the ground. An amenity that comes at the cost of nature's deterioration is not a sign of fecundity avers the bard. The word 'cities' insinuate that cities are getting taller and swelling in masses. This swelling stirs up to void because it is by putting animals, birds and nature to deterioration. The poet's trenchant words,

We have lost our tiny, plump, cheeky dinky
co-tenants Living in the sleek modern
eaveless buildings. (31)

Modern buildings have remained the emblem of freakishness with posh life style and are not true to life. Dipping into the memory banks of his fresh-faced days the poet yearns for the days where he, "woke up to their (sparrows) chirping in the early hours" (31). Hapless to relate, the poet, the representative of the current era has "lost in the din of purring, whirring and wheezing wheels" (31). The winged angels in the days of yore have now become a distant dream as their population dwindled. The poet regrets, "Now I see their paintings on cardboards in festivals." (31)

Animates have become inanimates because of industrialization. We are the aces in constructing skyscrapers investing all our flair. The chirping and tweeting of a bird makes one float on cloud nine but

we are doomed to pin back our ears only to the whirring sounds of the machines in the ambience of dust and din. Instead of birds tweeting human beings tweet at twitter.

Thus the poem wraps up that the progress without making the room for co-tenants is chimerical, unjustifiable and a no-win situation. Elango adduces, "The poem Co-Tenants is a kind of awareness to the mankind on the depletion of natural resources." (141)

Ragupathi's next poem "Nagamani" is worth a king's ransom on a snake. The poem is pertinent to the present. It pleads for sympathetic attitude towards dumb animals. It is tragedy to note that animals are becoming extinct. A scientist has augured that if honeybees are lost then the world would collapse within short period of time. Research and the Vedas corroborate the co-existence of animals and human beings for a balanced habitat. Raghupathi also voices for animals and opines that we should not take it for a ride for our egocentric means. Every one of us should fathom that animals have the equal right to live on this mother earth on par with human beings.

The 'woman in maroon sari' (25) is the archetype of the multitudinous unscrupulous people around us. Her gimmicks to exhibit the snake stone (got from the slit head of cobra) and sell it in order to feed her children makes plain that how animals are trapped for human's convenience. One of the rationalists in the group contradicts the deceitful practice. With no guilty feeling she says,

Snakes do not have any stones

Neither on the head nor on the hood.

Snake charmers slit the head

and put some non-genuine stones

before they make feats in front of the public. (26)

Against the aforementioned thought D. H. Lawrence's poem "Snake" (1999) is conscience-stricken. The poet throws a log at the snake which enters his water trough. He repents,

I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!

I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education. (63-64)

Thus this eco poem appeals for preserving and conserving animals from ruination.

Raghupathi sets our senses in motion by painting the scene of shower in the poem, "Then Came the Rain." The poem is a visual feast offered by the verbal showers of the poet. The rain is "twittering, pattering, drumming and roaring" (38) gaining access to the world of ecstasy. The shower is a symphony "carrying myriad of moods - romantic, magical and mystical" (38). It is a dance, "accompanied by whooshing winds and claps of thunders." (38) It is like a "gracious medieval prince/with bounteous gifts of love and compassion (39).

The adjectives and adverbs ferry us to seventh heaven and pronounce that everything under the roof of the sun is meant for elation. The nature poet like a camera man shoots the picture of migrating birds lashing with gusto on the backdrop of autumn rain. It is not only the rhapsody but the rain also washes the human sins. It renovates the orb to a million shades of green, a symbol of fecundity. By erasing the past memories, it gives way to 'oohs' and 'aahs' in the farmer's hearts, celebrating prosperity.

Similar to Raghupathi, the poet Chambial (2012) paints the picture of rain in his poem "Rains",

It rained throughout the night...

Echoed all around in the air...

The wind whistled; the trees

Danced a frantic dance." (14)

Manas Bakshi (2015) also unveils the pulchritude of the rain that enlightens the fallen spirit in his poetry collections, *Maudlin Musings*,

Outside it rains

Inside, it springs up

Nostalgic sequence. (12)

Thus the rainfall negates and strides ahead as an icon of aspiration and optimism. The poem is not only meant for highly coloured and vivid description to cater our aesthetic sense it is an earnest plea, a clarion call to conserve nature the inimitable, unique, superlative gift of god.

The poem "Room in a Bogie" is the verbal video of a train scene. It spotlights the mean mindset of the passengers who cannot adjust and allot space to a co-passenger. The poet who wanted to take a pew in the bogie beseeches,

Never mind, I can sit resting my right buttock on the edge (18),

Adjust please, it is only for two hours (18)

You know I am aged

You must respect the old

This is our *Dharma*." (18)

The plead of the poet goes unheeded, does not actuate the virtues of the relentless passengers who claim,

What *dharma* are you speaking?

Dharma is only for four to sit and not for the fifth. (19)

The poet feels dismal of the excuses offered by the ruthless passengers. The readers too feel pained at the plight that the poet has experienced, which is the normal experience of a common man in the unreserved bogeys in Indian railways

Ants, sheep, silkworm, hanging bats, dry fish, hawker, buffaloes etc render service to channelize poet's unease. The adjective 'overused train, foul-smelling bogie' connotes the shoddy state of Indian railways. The poem not only mouths off bard's twinge but also brings lively the roar and screaming of the locomotive in an enriching verse. Despite all these exertions and effort, the grace and glamour of the passing train makes the poet gallop to the memoirs of his distant past.

The poem is the versifier's constructive endeavor to make a full featured film on the scenes in the unreserved bogies of the Indian railways and

the ideology on *dharma* conceptualized in different ways. Thus the poet's attempts to come to naught in getting a rear end in a jumbo train. Teamwork and adaptability are mandatory only to sustain in career and never meant for real life is the diction of today's man. 'I' and 'My' are placed in the pedestal while 'We' and 'Ours' are shunned asserts the bard.

Chaudhuri's essay "Eternal Silence of the Infinite Crowds" (1998) drives home the scenes of the London Tube Station, "Underground trains where they could think of nothing than to bury their faces in the newspapers...looked like long lines of ants going into their holes.... they are perhaps the most silent places of all" (35-36) which is at odds with the rabble and swarm in Indian carriages.

With the advent of the current technology Bionic pants termed as 'Chairless Chair', a chair that enables one to wear mitigates the passenger's trials where one wears it as apparel. This outfit (pant) becomes a chair and helps to sit during crisis and allows walking in a normal fashion otherwise. Thus technology comes handy to resolve or even blank out many shags and hitches but it should be pressed into right service.

The next input "Amma" is a personal, profound, poignant and plaintive poem that pays tribute to his mother. In these days getting meaning for any word is dime a dozen but the only word with no parallel is *Amma*. Though the word 'Mummy' comes into picture it doesn't carry the affection of *amma*. When the word is spelled in Tamil or Telugu, the south Indian languages, one can observe the combining of lips which is its specialty. The poem is a soul-stirring note on the apprehension of a mother, an icon of sacrifice and selflessness. Though enough was spoken on mother, the definitive example of offering in literature, Raghupathi's angle in projecting *Amma* is distinguished and has a claim to move up the ladder.

The first two stanzas explicate the life or death condition of the poet's mother, a haggard woman who brings up eight children in eight successive years. The adjective 'faded' used to describe mother is grave. The word, 'faded house'

(27) insinuates the ambience of the house that is sullen and sober. Similarly, the poet laments continuous pregnancies and births, the humdrum of domestic chores with no concern over self has led to the withered, woebegone and lackluster state of the mother.

A woman is the pivotal of a family. Incontrovertibly her indisposition divests peace and makes life dreary. Hence the faded house is appropriate. Eternal rest is melancholic but the torment before it weighs a ton rather than the quietus. The mother is taken for a ride to this appalling and spine-chilling state. The mother abhors her, feels that she is not up to scratch. Hence she wails. Her parting words,

Oh God take me away

I am useful

Neither to my partner nor to my children

Nor to the world. (27)

The poet draws animals and objects of nature to transport the downcast condition of mother who becomes a gull to decease. The phrases like "cold mat, cold floor", "eyes half-closed like the hen's", "Like the gentle footsteps of the wind over the Godavari", "The air ...thick with over ripened leaves", "Surging tears sank like autumn well" (34) make one oh-so riveting and enables to envision the distressing condition of the mother.

In Desai's novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), Nanda Kaul an old woman being vexed of continuous pregnancies, child birth and domestic chores resolves the burden by fleeing to a remote place snapping affiliations after her husband's death. Thereafter "she no more wished to add to them ...to her own pared, reduced and radiantly single life" (31). Similarly, Sita, a pregnant woman in *Where shall we go this Summer* cocoons under the shelter of magic powers to preserve her child in the womb in her fifth pregnancy as she conceives that world is inimical and could not receive her child with glee. But the poet's mother an embodiment of virtue and renunciation adjures deity to take her away, as she is of service neither to her partner nor to her children and the world. Thus the poem

"Amma" stands sky high with no similitude. Service to clan, being an object of utility is the only mandate of the manifold mothers all over.

The poem, "Father, for Whom the Last Bells Told" is similar to "Amma" is a tribute to venerated father. Mother is the cynosure of many writings. She is epitomized for her supreme offering. But not many poems have been written on father who also has predominant role in bringing up the child. They are the silent heroes who shoulder the family and it would be disproportionate if there is no mention of their immense role. The present poem is an intense note on the demise of the poet's father who led the poet's hands warmly in childhood. Grievously, the hand which guided the poet as a boy is shivering now,

That hand that gripped me like hawk's talons released slowly, the last dregs struggled. (63)

Finally, the father's "battle with death was over" (63), but the indomitable spirit instilled by him has made the poet remark that "Darkness was nothing but joy for me" (63) "because life lessons that he taught/spread like banyan branches, I picked up everything like a reaper" (63). The poet ends with a sense of joy saying, "I wouldn't be I am today" (63).

Thus an encomium on father is to divulge that his demise is not a loss for the poet, but a gain. It is an acclamation to parent's selfless services. The message of the poem is strong that a circle would be complete only when we in turn acknowledge, give due and shower love on our parents during their dotage.

"Hunger" is a proof on the posh upper class who barely ponder on the food waste in "Marriages and social gatherings, conferences and seminars" (65). The celebrities parade their opulence by serving motley food items and the guests blow trumpet by consuming it in little proportions. The poet laments, 'Brutal and colonial, as waste material, food is thrown/to quench fashion, men perfumed' (65). His potent lines hit a verbal nail on their uncouth behavior,

At least the animals are decent amidst scanty over the laws of sharing unconsciously and leaving nothing. (65)

The poet avows that the ravenous state is not the cry of a few "but the pain of millions reflecting in half sunken eyes." (65)

The following hard hitting lines depict the grief of human made catastrophe called starvation.

.... half sunken eyes

and half-dried river beds of their bowels.

When they set out for hunt

In unrhythmical breathing between their lungs and nostrils." (65-66)

The bard juxtaposes the "bleeding pain of first menstruation" (65) to "the surging pain in hunger." (65) The poem depicts an abominable picture of the impoverished. They are round the bins foraging for half-eaten food swarmed by flies to quench their burning bowels. This is the nerve-racking sketch of the famished condition. The poem makes it crystal clear that sharing is a golden virtue and entails to be worked on as accentuated by Abdul Kalam in his poem "Are We Alone." (2011)

You give and give till you are united,

Love is continuum

That's the mission of humanity." (11-13)

Conclusion

It may be said that every word from Raghupathi's pen carries precepts that spread the ideology of propriety and probity. His poems "Accident" and "Broken Heart" propagate philosophies for a composed and placid life. The poet looks through rose- coloured spectacles despite the macabre of accident. He proposes the prominence of self- appraisal for enlightenment. Poems such as "Co-tenants", "Nagamani", and "Then Came the Rain" uphold the virtues to preserve flora and fauna. "Room in a Bogie" and "Hunger" bespeak the virtues of *dharma*, helping tendency and sharing. "Amma" and "Father for Whom the Last Bells Told", accentuate parents' sacrifice and our obligation to take care of them. The virtues epitomized are like flowers in a string

which sing paeans and garland the 'humane' in human. Naresh (2015) appends, "Each poem of Raghupathi ends with a morale, philosophy and wisdom." (109) It is essential to conceptualize the magnitude of the poet's virtues and abide by it. The verses have set right the ethical values and urges to save the planet for the gen Y. "Life is a pure flame and we live by an invisible sun within us" proclaims Sir Thomas Brown. George (2016) adjoins, "Let us live life to the fullest, be grateful for each and every blessing we already are in possession." (14) Raghupathi's poems make us decipher the flame and invisible sun within us that would obliterate darkness and give counsel to lead a valuable and ethical life.

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