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Poetic Sensibility of Jaydeep Sarangi: A Study of *The Wall and Other Poems*

*–Sandeep Kumar Sheoran**

Abstract

Indo-Anglian poetry is an established genre with a wide range of practitioners and themes. There are poets who catch readers by their hand and take them on an intellectual flight which is something like an addiction afterwards. Modern Indo-Anglian poetry can boast of a few such poets and Jaydeep Sarangi is a true son of the Muse who captures the authentic emotions of the people and presents a universal picture through it. *The Wall and Other Poems* by Jaydeep Sarangi is a collection of forty eight poems of movement from personal sensibility of borders to the wider presence as well as urge to collapse all that separates men, geographies and minds. Sarangi wants the walls to die at least "in mind's cabin". Many of the poems leave the readers thinking about some corrective measures for the issues around us.

Keywords: Modern poetry, walls, boundaries, regional colour, autobiographical.

Indo-Anglian literature has covered a long journey from pre-independence days of the Western influence to the modern times of ultimate freedom of expression in terms of literary themes and style. Trends have been set, changed and wiped out with the passage of time. Now a days, when readers want entertainment without irking nerves, it's time for thrill in literature too and anything that doesn't cater this is counted obsolete. Indo-Anglian poetry is an established genre with a wide range of practitioners and themes. P.C.K. Prem remarks about the present state of Indo-Anglian poetry:

> During recent times, poetry has begun to exhibit a legitimately Indian outlook, and genuine love for heritage and culture. That, Indian poets in English display comfortable control on universal themes will be transparent as one starts to relish English poetry of India. (Prem ix)

The English poets in India with varied regional flavours, languages and cultural roots express individual and collective aspirations drawing inspirations from various sources. There are poets who catch readers by their hand and take them on an intellectual flight

* *Assistant Professor of English, Maharaja Agrasen College, Jagadhri, Haryana. Email: soniasoni.rewari@gmail.com*

which is something like an addiction afterwards. Modern Indo-Anglian poetry can boast of a few such poets and Jaydeep Sarangi is a true son of the Muse who captures the authentic emotions of the people and presents a universal picture through it. Prof. Mohan Ramanan remarks in the foreword of *The Wall and Other Poems*, "He writes in English no doubt but is aware like A.K. Ramanujan, that his inner forms are Bengali, while outer forms are English and European". K.V. Dominic highlights the sensibility of the contemporary poets in terms of themes:

> Since the contemporary scenario is full of inconsistencies, contradictions, violent bitterness, fake love, distortion and infidelity in relations, dichotomy in socio-economic and political thought, vicious corruption, rise in killing instinct, militant outlook, mounting terror and creeping sense of insecurity, all these features of this age ought to find expression in poetry also. (Dominic xx)

The Wall and Other Poems by Jaydeep Sarangi is a collection of forty eight poems of movement from personal sensibility of borders to the wider presence as well as urge to collapse all that separates men, geographies and minds. Sarangi himself defines his job as a poet in "Bio data of a Poet":

> He holds the world in one hand.
> Shakes it
> Rubs it
> Crushes it
> He takes the skin out
> With both hands. (5-10)

According to Sarangi, a poet cannot be passive. It is not the nature of a poet to just be a witness. His blood boils, his mind jolts the thoughts and his creativity makes an impression on the world. A poet can even take the skin out the dead hopes to rejuvenate them. Possibility is always lurking in the heart of a poet. The central idea of wall as a separating and demarking metaphor is dexterously borrowed from Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall". Frost makes it clear that wall is both desirable as well as hateful. Frost leaves it upto the reader to support or opposes a wall because "there is something that doesn't love a wall" and simultaneously "good fences make good neighbours". However, Sarangi is clear about the wall that he referring here. His metaphor is of wider implications. There is whole range of boundaries, walls and restrictions curbing human emotions, freedoms and thoughts. *Wall and Other Poems* opens up with a long cherished dream of all Bengalis in "Friendship beyond Borders". The collection takes its flight highlighting something unavoidable that has created walls and something that doesn't want these walls. In his heart of hearts, poet knows that a reunion is not possible still efforts are always there to search for a common ground by using various similes and metaphors. Rivers, birds, rain, wind, poet and thoughts are always ready to crush the walls that distinguish and are adamant in distinguishing even after many pious efforts:

> Walls stand up and shake hands,
> Crossing borders of the mind
> And then, two hands extending a friendship (1-3)

Sarangi lets us listen his heart throbs for our heart responses. The poetry of Sarangi rises from the reality and actuality of life in the way plant rises from the ground of truth to bloom the flowers of facts. The optimism and positivity of the poet is noteworthy in the very first poem. He wants "for once, let us forget time" and "let us wear sari in the same way".

Sarangi has moved ahead of the physical wall. He has noted this wall separating people, countries, *Zenana* and *Mardana* too. For a sensitive creature like poet, the silence on the other side of the wall is painful as he cannot go dumb about it all the time. In "Sailing through Ichamati", the poet presents both sides of the coin in front of us when a country is divided and brothers are separated overnight even without asking their wish. He understands that "we are a very old wall", but he leaves the pen on this burning desire for all hearts:

> We are twins.
> Our veins have one blood
> Even when we are separate souls on the map (13-15)

The poet has very sensibly declared that it is not only physical wall that is to be scorned, but there are many walls in the minds of people demarking between man and woman, Hindu and Muslim, native and foreigner. Jaydeep Sarangi is ready to invite the readersin breaking the wall in "Black Hole" when he remarks:

> You break all norms
> With one strike. I follow. (7-8)
> …….
> Somewhere the systems are in reverse order:
> All eyes on the black hole. Life springs from there. (18-19)

People "wear the colours of land" and sing the song for the land where they live caring little about any other land on earth as they are tough patriots cheering their cricket team. The poet sketches a picture of the tea-stall where people break all walls and discuss a range of topics with open hearts and a lot of stories are always ready there:

> Each time I go there
> I have a story to write.
> Each one over there
> Is a character. A protagonist, perhaps (25-28)

India is a land of multiple languages and these languages bind as well as separate people and Jaydeep Sarangi firmly believes that "Language is a master". "Living on the Edge" is a saga of the people who reside in the confusion of the territory. Sarangi is critical of the hollow economic progress. He wants economic progress to reach to the lowest level when common people are able to live a comfortable life. The difference between the classes is widening and "The *aamaadmi* survives/with nerves in their mouth". The poet questions the present economic growth in "Let my Children have Enough Rice and Milk for their Meals":

What is wrong with my land?
Each stone has a history. Each pillar whispers a story.
Let us ask for a simple boon,
"Let my children have enough rice and milk". (19-22)

There is a great responsibility on poets for dismantling the walls because "a poet writes back on the walls for a better society". Every human being has to decide to which side he/she belongs and "We prepare our mind to land somewhere/This side or that side of the wall" as sense of belonging gives us an identity. The poet is very much hopeful of an amicable world around him and solace is claimed in personal relationships when he says, "Life is a harp. We must know/Where to touch. It's a song". There is a unique freshness about the poems loaded with rich Indian flavours and more importantly, the poet is very successful in touching the right chords of every sensitive soul. Jaydeep Sarangi is one of the most convincing modern Indian poets who catches the reader with his hand and invites him to take a dive deep into the problematic issues of the world around us, still holding his hand with a lot of faith in the goodness of human heart. Nissim Ezekiel remarks about the duty of a poet in "At 62":

I celebrate the familiar,
the routine,
and the unexpected.
……..
I want my hands
to learn how to heal myself
and heal others,
before I hear
my last song. (Ezekiel 273-74)

Jaydeep Sarngi matches Ezekiel in terms of highlighting the duty of a poet in "Why is This Neglect":

There is a reason for poetry to respond.
A poet writes on the back of wall for a better society:
Those who are unable to speak
Will have a say. (20-23)

Bengali colour of the poet is well evident in his "Growing up in Kolkata" where he uses a lot of words highlighting the life in Kolkata in general through his own routine. Use of words such as "Bangla sounds", "Hilsa", "Bengali meal", "Rosogolla", "Darjeeling tea", "Rabindra sangeet", "Political discussion", "Uttam Kumar", "Suchitra Sen", "Kalighat" give authentic contour to the poet's life and experience.

Jaydeep Sarangi is deeply involved in the issues where the future of man is concerned. He is not only addressing people at the intellectual level, but he is also participating at many levels to correct the world around him in one way or the other, and he "carry/Life sketches of man crossing the horizons" ("Diabetic Bones" 2-3). Emotional attachment with day to day mis-happenings around the poet disturbs him, still he believes in what "A traveler to India once said/God smiles here" ("Night

Flowering Jasmine" 5-6). The poet wants everything in black and white because he acknowledges walls that create confusions. In "Captain, Crew, Please Prepare the Captain for Landing", Sarangi clearly puts it:

> All creations die
> In mind's cabin.
> We prepare our mind to land somewhere
> This side or that side of the wall. (18-21)

In the heart of his hearts, Sarangi wants the walls to die at least "in mind's cabin". The poet's outlook and presentation of the world around him compels the readers to examine it closely and one cannot finish *The Wall and Other Poems* without diving deep at the wish of the guide. Many of the poems leave the readers thinking about some corrective measures for the issues around us. The poet speaks for everyone, though the autobiographical touch is prominent. Many valid questions about life and existence in the modern world arise out of the prolonged deliberations of the poet trying to extract truth. Sarangi seems to agree with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in believing, "Truth is not the exclusive possession of any one individual or class or race or religion. The one truth has many faces. The real is one; wise men speak of it in many ways" (Radhakrishnan 78).

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