Pashupati Jha. *Awaiting Eden Again*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2015, pp.92. HB. Price. Rs. 195 / US $. 10. ISBN: 978-93-5207-047-3.

Reviewed by
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Pashupati Jha is one of the famous names among the leading Indian English poets. He is the author of "three widely read and reviewed" collections of poems: *Cross and Creation* (2003), *Mother and Other Poems* (2005), and *All in One* (2011). *Awaiting Eden Again* (2015) is his fourth collection of poems having sixty four poems on various themes. Being a true poet of earth, he gives a natural flow to his thought where moral, social and economic issues find their true expressions besides other issues. Like Sri Aurobindo, Prof. Jha believes that "poetry has mantra-like power" and its function is "to stir our feelings profoundly and transform our stony heart into human sensibility." (Preface) He also suggests that if this belief is followed in its true sense then "cruelty and violence would be automatically minimised". (Preface)

"Eden" is believed to be a "beautiful garden where Adam and Eve, the first humans, lived" and it was "a place of happiness and innocence". The book, *Awaiting Eden Again* has also the elements of happiness and innocence but to continue enjoying the happiness, there is a condition that good values should not be compromised at any cost. This kind of compromise results in evils, and it also opens the doors for all other evils. Poetry has an enchanting power and its sadhana can help one to avert growing evils in society and their multiplicity.

The book begins with the poem, entitled "Poetry" in which Prof. Jha writes about the function of poetry. For him, poetry "is not a luxury" and "not an opiate to fanciful dreams/of fragrant flowers, mermaids and fairies" but it has a kind of "assimilated force" that is able "to burst open the third eye." The "third eye" is the "inner eye" which can make one's perception capable of seeing things on deeper and higher level what the "ordinary" eyes fail to do. This eye can

> …. create a budding blaze-
> the rising sun with all heat and glow-
> to enlighten the engulfed depth
> of darkness, transforming
> fossilized stones to ooze
> water-crystal pure, cool
> and quenching. ("Poetry", 17-23)

The poet expresses his unhappiness about the foul means used these days by those who believe that money can bring everything for them. He writes that one who gets birth with "a silver spoon in his mouth", he makes it "gold". Such person lives full luxurious life, having "imported cars", good bank balance, and being always surrounded by sycophants, away from the harsh reality of life. The fact is that when such person dies

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none is there to mourn his death-
from the dust he came
to the dust he returneth. ("A Page of History" 16-18)

Opposite of the above, there is a person who has

… a kind and pure heart
sincerity of aim and action
whatever he does, goes to all
with no return expected
or asked for. His words
ring true, as if uttered
directly from the divinity. ("A Page of History" 20-26)

This kind of person does not care for his own loss and gain and lives his life for others. He comes from the dust but returns to the eternity and his physical death is mourned by millions. The poet says that such person "becomes a page of history." There are many poems in the book having such noble thoughts that really touch the heart of the reader and the poet succeeds in his aim.

The poem, "Earth Mother" has elements of beauty. This is a symbolic poem where the mother earth symbolizes an old lady who was very beautiful in her youth; as India was known as a golden bird and a centre of attraction for other countries. That attraction developed jealousy in some tyrants who invaded her and took numerous lives. These days also there are many such overambitious people who are jealous of India's glorious past, and the oldest civilization. They don't like peace and prosperity of our mother land. The poet connects the physical beauty to the eternal beauty. Like a lady, India was a source of smile, happiness and inspiration for many people in her youth: "her world was the smiles of life around her" (17). The poet writes that "her old age is the source of all your youth." (23) So instead of teasing her, they should "salute her/with reverence". It is a fact that all countries have their own ways of living; and India is known for her varied cultural identity and for having the same respect for all cultures and traditions in the world. It is difficult for some to digest and therefore they see India with evil eyes. The poet suggests those envious people to respect her as she is

…….. the only
goddess visible in this world, the source
and sustenance of eternal life on earth. ("Earth Mother" 28-30)

There is a love for his native place is the poem "From Where I Began". The poet loves and likes his native place so much that he does not talk about any foreign land. He remembers his old "thatched room" where he took birth and he desires not to "go further to look for" his "luck" he "would end" there where he began.

Social fabric is very important to keep one united with family and friends. Without it people feel alienated. Its absence also gives birth to unhealthy situation in family and society. When the concept of nuclear family is very popular these days, and people have no time to meet and wish their friends and relatives, Prof. Jha propagates mutual

love and respect through his poetry. The poems, "Old Lies", "New Year", and "Made for Each Other" echo the voice of familial tie in the modern fast life.

The present situation of India is palpable. Rape, crime and misuse of power have become common happenings. Thesedevelop anger and anguish in people. The poet well illustrates his concern in the poem, "The Way of the World". He writes that "A bird hunted down/can't curse the hunter" (1-2) and "those who live by the sword/die by the sword." (23-24)

Material pleasure has enslaved the minds of people and "unchecked ambition and arrogance" have spread everywhere.

> Nothing seems safe now from the lust
> for gold and the lechery of flesh. ("Purging Fire" 12-13)

The above situation and so many other worse incidents are the result of the changing meaning of the words in the minds of men.

> Honesty for the few means principle of life
> for majority others, it is simply a ploy,
> a game to cheat the innocent and the gullible;
> love to some is surrender and sacrifice
> for many others, it is satisfaction of the ego
> bloated further by each such conquest. ("Changing Meaning" 3-8)

The poet writes that this is the effect of *Kaliyug,* which is "no more a myth now." So this is the time of "incarnation" of God Who can save the earth from these vices and "brutality".

Presenting a vivid scene of accidental death of a person, the poet successfully tries to reveal the reality of life that one who comes on the earth, he is bound to die. Our boasting, show off, and all kinds of lust go in vain. Humanity is the real identity of a human being that should be developed and one should be always ready to help others and save the lives of others. This is the true devotion.

All are busy to achieve success in his life at any cost. The meaning of success has also changed. These days success is not attained only by hard labour and incessant honest efforts, it is often attained by "selling both body and soul". ("Fake" 13)

Besides the above issues, social discrimination, inhuman practices, false beliefs, and ultimately a hope for a new world are the major themes of the poems in *Awaiting Eden Again*, all presented in a lucid language and sometimes with the clear imagery that the reader can understand them easily and grasp the essence of the poet's cherished message. Thus the poems of this collection suit the demand of time that can be read, relished and used for research purposes.

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