Jaydeep Sarangi. *A Door Somewhere?* Allahabad: Cyberwit.net, 2014. pp. 68, Price: $15 & ₹ 200.00. ISBN: 978 81-8253-490-2.

Reviewed by
Mr. Rob Harle*

This latest book by Jaydeep Sarangi is a treasure trove of excellent poems. No matter what else poetry does it must move the reader in some way – bring a tear to the eye, arouse indignation, stir the heart – Sarangi's poetry fulfils this criterion very well.

His poems use simple language but many are quite complex and to truly appreciate them require a couple of readings. This is not a criticism, exactly the opposite in fact, poetry which engages the readers' imagination, defies everyday "shopkeepers" logic and is appreciated intuitively is poetry of the highest calibre. Simic alludes to this notion of poetry when he states:

> Like our ancient ancestors who inhabited an animistic universe, the poet claims the interconnectedness and sentience of all things. This is what haunts: a world where magic is possible, where chance reigns, where metaphors have their supreme logic, where imagination is free and truthful. ("The Uncertain Certainty" - Charles Simic 1985 Uni. of Michigan Press)

This statement perfectly describes Sarangi's poetry and yes he does claim, an "interconnectedness and sentience of all things." I would add to this that if a poem reads like a sentence or paragraph in a newspaper then it is a poor poem indeed. A considerable amount of contemporary poetry is guilty of this trait, the use of the free-verse form is not an excuse to abandon metaphor, rhythm, cadence or poetic subtleties.

Sarangi casts his net widely and we find works which empathise with marginalised, downtrodden groups and individuals; which exalt the simple beauty of nature; suggest ways of communicating with divinity; and honour family and ancestral roots. The poem *Day Breaking* (p. 48) is an example of re-connecting with the "animistic universe" where the breaking of the day isn't just a thing that happens but a living, dynamic entity – almost like a person, the daybreak is "leaning on the doorway":

> The daybreak is leaning
> On the doorway now, with shadows of an earlier night,
> Night's lullabies welcome the yellow Sun
> When the body
> Finds its wrapper.

In the poem *A Letter To God* (p. 51) the poet is reminding God, he is here trying to communicate and get some help in his task of honouring the natural world, his use of subtle metaphor and evocative imagery is just exquisite:

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I read your music
On the black windows
Like the souls of the rain-lashed trees.

further on:

I want new words in my kingdom
To write poesy that is not old.
My words should have wings
To suck honey from little buds
I envy butterflies.

Dr. Usha Bande in the foreword to this collection makes a very important observation regarding the way poetry interacts with society, speaking about poets like Jaydeep Sarangi:

> When words and ideas rush through the mind, there is no choice but to express them, to write down and offer the world a vision, albeit a personal one. Slowly, the vision gets established and others also start seeing the beauty. True to the dictum that poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, the process of change starts.

We see this in a poem like *Caged Bard* (p. 29) which is celebrating the move to freedom of Dalits and other extremely oppressed people:

Long struggles
Demystified Byapari of false honours
of the caste-ridden society
He discovers beauty in working class,
Cooperation among have-nots,
Humanism in rebels,
Simplicity of outcastes.

We witness here in Sarangi not only a poet who writes about the beauty of nature so as to help others appreciate it *again,* but also a humanitarian who uses poetry as a vehicle to bring about positive change for other humans. Sarangi is passionate about this work not only in his poems, but also in his position as an educator, and as a translator of Dalit literature, such as in *The Wheel Will Turn,* a recent publication by Cyberwit in which Sarangi with some other scholars translates the poetry of Manohar Biswas.

Some lines from *Window On The World* (p. 47):

He struggles hard and captures each rainy moment
Of life's daily
The wheel of Justice,
Got stuck for awhile
A stone somewhere
A gutter, perhaps
Causing oppression to the powerless,

But will turn again to re-establish
A just society

Biswas believes the "pen is mightier than the sword", stating that his pen is his weapon for bringing about social change, Sarangi clearly agrees with this and sees words and books as a way to set free the oppressed.

A verse from the title poem *A Door-Somewhere? (p. 62)*:

Books are doors to read the world
Where images travel fast.

further on:

My thoughts are love songs
And morning prayers for the unquiet stones of history
Where musing is a relentless struggle
With a door of paper.
All poets record the torn profiles of men
Searching for his painted house, springs splashes of blood.
It's a door between the self and the world.

"All poets record the torn profiles of men
Searching for his painted house, springs splashes of blood."

These brilliant lines indicate we are in the presence of truly great poetry and a poet who moves effortlessly between the material world and metaphysical realms.

From *Sleep* (p. 44) a few lines:

Life's ember
Sparks with a flash,
A tender journey within
With a magic rod
To enlighten each rock
Speaking to another.

I have written elsewhere we need to recuperate our *abandoned metaphysical and spiritual modes of being*. The new poetics and art will help re-humanise the technology of the digital, embrace sustainability and re-envisage the "mysterium, tremendum et fascinans." Jaydeep Sarangi's poetry is doing exactly this, if you support the effort to create a better, more just world for all global citizens, then owning a copy of this collection of poems will aid in this goal and of course be a wonderful addition to your library.

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