Sangeeta Mahesh. *Ocean of Thoughts: Poems about Social Issues and Human Values*. New Delhi: Authors Press, 2014. pp.64. Price: ₹ 195.00. ISBN: 978-81-7273-861-7.

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Ocean of Thoughts: Poems about Social Issues and Human Values is the first collection of poems by Sangeeta Mahesh. It comprises thirty five poems on various aspects of life. The book begins with invocation to Lord Ganesha, 'God of wisdom, knowledge and new beginnings.' The poet begs the Lord to spread 'spiritual thoughts' and reveal the 'the beauty of simplicity'. She seeks the ability to 'sing songs for the welfare of the world' and 'raise voice/For the sufferings of the mankind'. Her yearning for the welfare of humanity finds detailed notes in the poem 'Invocation to Lord Ganesha'.

There are human touch and spiritual longing in her poems. She wants to make her poem 'the song of humanity'. She believes that attaining 'lofty thoughts' one can get victory over the 'worldly thoughts', 'materialism', 'power', 'Money, physical beauty and lust'. ('Ocean of Thoughts') She suggests thatto achieve 'peace' and spiritual delight one needs to change worldly perception. In beginning one can be 'baffled and restless' but it is strong inclination that helps one to achieve it. ('I am the Wave in the Ocean…')

Her human touch is also evident in the poem 'Wail of a Female Foetus':

I was in my mother's womb
Like a pretty pearl in the sea-shell
I was feeling secured and safe
Under my mom's loving protective veil (1- 4)

I was killed before taking birth
I vanished before seeing the light on earth
A female was killed by a female doctor (21-23)

It is a cold-hearted and 'ruthless' mentality of discrimination between boy and girl that babies are killed before taking birth. The fact is that 'a woman' kills 'a woman'. This is a social evil, 'a shame' and 'a curse' on humanity, as the poet describes in the poem.

Poverty is another curse described by the poet. She does not see India free due to several reasons. There are various temples where she finds abundance of 'silver and gold' and coming outside of them she finds the beggars 'Shivering in winter with cold' having no 'proper clothes or shelter' and 'staring at every passer-by/For a rupee or a coin'. ('Why Should One Starve in Free India' 2-7) This is an irony on humanity and freedom. The poet adds that:

No, my motherland has not got freedom
It's helpless even to feed its own children
My India will be free when it will get freedom
From empty bellied, hunger stricken children
('Why Should One Starve in Free India' 24-27)

The poet suggests that humanity is the best religion. It should be cultivated to reap the

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fruits of 'love','compassion', 'peace and harmony'. Poverty can be eradicated through spreading this religion.

Religious places should be meant for spreading humanity but it is not so. Today humanity cries due to selfishness and dishonesty prevalent in every corner of the world. Killing has become a part of religion. Often we read the news of bloodshed with the name of religion. Somewhere saints indulge in rape 'Under the false cover of … religion'. ('Beware of Wolves' 4) The poet says that:

> These imposters are more voracious than wolves
> The wolves live in jungles, these with us in disguise
> ('Beware of Wolves' 5-6)

> They attack on women, followers of them
> And make them the victims of their lust
> They are more poisonous than the poison
> ('Beware of Wolves' 9-11)

Here is a note of suggestion:

> Oh, my fellow beings! Beware of these wolves
> Let not them prey you making you blind
> Service to mankind is the service to God
> ('Beware of Wolves' 17-19)

The poems 'Essence of Life', and 'What is Life?' also deal with love, fraternity and humanity at large.

Sangeeta Mahesh is a poet of courage and hope. When the poet depicts the pictures of modern time, she does not forget India's glorious past. With the help of mythical examples she better describes it. She says in her poem 'Fly High in the Boundless Sky' that nothing is impossible to achieve if courage and wit are used like Lord Hanuman who crossed the sea in search of Sita Mata facing great hurdles and being examined by Sursa.

The corruption spread every where in India draws poet's attention. She believes that India's beauty and prosperity allured foreigners resulting in being invaded by them. They looted our motherland for centuries but the worst time has come when her own children loot, destroy and defame her.

However, believes that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain. This is meant for keeping balance. We should not be pessimistic. 'Withering of flowers is not the end of redolence/It tells that old departs and new takes place.' ('Why to Cry' 11-12)

We find revolutionary zeal in the poems '16 December, a Day of Resolution' and 'The Change is in the Air'. There is an ecological order in the poem 'Nature, a Boon to Us by Our Beloved Creator'. There are many other important issues dealt in some other poems that are also worth noticing.

The book is surely a good read dealing with different aspects of life. The most important point in the poems is that the poet does not only expose the problems, she suggests the solutions too. She uses simple language and easy to understand imagery to convey her message to the readers. The book is worth recommending for general readers as well as research purposes.

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