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From the Mundane to the Metaphysical- Recasting Territories in Jaydeep Sarangi's *A Door Somewhere?*

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Abstract

Jaydeep Sarangi's recent collection of poems *A Door Somewhere?* opens into the readers mind myriad pictures, incessantly alive and rapturously sublime. The paper gives a bird's eye view of most of his challenging poems in the volume and introduces the readers into the possible areas of exploration. Sarangi churns his words into obedience, dealing with the mundane as well as the metaphysical. His voice speaks for the silent subaltern and for the world around him. Postcolonial writing back to the empire, drawing connections between India and Australia are the global themes which are as simply important as the local nuances he finds in his birth land.

Keywords: Poetry, Subaltern, Dalit, Postcolonial, Australia.

There is a strange power Jaydeep Sarangi holds over words. In his recent collection, *A Door Somewhere?* he churns words into obedience, sometimes gently, sometimes with urgency as he himself says, "Life rides on words" ("Baby Growing in a Poet" 31)

The resolute feminine in the role of the mother is a sustained image throughout the collection. It comes from a deep rooted love and Sarangi is proud to proclaim, "My temple has one deity - my mother." ("Prayer" 8) Yet mother does not only reconcile to the "Homely quit" sitting "beside the lantern" where she can "listen to my heart beats" ("Prayer" 3-4). She is not stereotyped into cozy niches and placidvicinities; she also evolves as the dark mother, Kali, powerful, fiery and the demolisher of vices.

> Kali has a garland of fifty human heads
> All are bloody
> Vices beheaded by mothers love".
> ("The Dark Mother" 13-15)

The juxtaposition of contrasts is violently bound by love.

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The birth of poetry and the pangs of the poetic creation fleet by in abundance in the collection. The poet, like a birdwatcher and a naturalist, waits for every flutter of its wings, every unfurling of the leaves. In this magical time, he says,

> My thoughts are now
> Waiting. Small things are
> Recalled and stored
> In raindrops and wind blowing.
> ("Small things in Life" 1-4)

Poetry opens not only windows, but also doors and we leave leaping, riding on its wings in ecstasy, and forgetting-

> Old castles live with memories
> Of ancient ghosts chanting.
> ("Small things in life" 28-29)

As he says, "at times I ride on time" ("Small things in life" 17) and in this tryst, even time, the ultimate leveler does not comply to the poet.

Images from two worlds find their voices in Sarangi's poetic realm. The world, where "Facebook friends wait for likes" ("My Image" 6), and a world where "like dinosaurs/you belong to the past" ("In Memory of an Inkpot" 1-2). Yet, the poet is not lost in the present, rather draws energy from every yesterday and hopes from every tomorrow. The world is complete in this synergy.

Aptly titled, "*A Door Somewhere?* "the collection delves with a myriad of doors, some opening out to let the world in and the others opening in to let the darkness out. This is a world "where walls are doors into things." ("Beyond the walls" 15) It opens anywhere and everywhere, linking the past and the present. He points out that "Each time I read history/I find a door somewhere."("A Door Somewhere"1-2) "It's a door between the self and the world/Despair dances in hope." (17-18)

There is an overpowering sense of optimism that leaps up, buoyant in Jaydeep Sarangi's words. Thoughts darkening in its course, burdened by the heavy weight of reality, leaps up fighting, never willing to be let down. They fly like "kites in the sky" ("Words" 9). He writes,

> The wheel of justice,
> Got stuck for a while
> A stone somewhere
> A gutter, perhaps
> Causing oppression to the powerless,
> But will turn again to reestablish
> A just society
> With a different key.
> ("Window on the World" 3-10)

Yet at times, the wry humour cannot be mistaken

> Blood is sold at low price, all can buy it.
> May be with discount
> One bottle free, if you buy one.
> ("Globalised Manners" 9-11)

Heavy words pregnant with meaning, like dark rain bearing clouds loom momentously on the startled reader, only to find himself in the downpour of thoughts mingled with love and compassion, dancing in orchestrated symphony. The reader finds himself provoked, dared to accept or negate the claims made by the poet, and then wishfully indulge in the poets words like "raindrops for the thirsty earth." ("Relationship" 23)

There is a journey from the mundane to the metaphysical and back, the poet is aware of his poetic credentials and it is no blind faith that makes his decisions for him. He is aware of the marginalized, the basket carrying village girls, and Samudra's daughter who counts off days for her "father to bring bags of happiness" ("Someone Waits for Me" 7), the unnoticed postman, even the

> .. gentle flow of Dulong
> Through tribal villages.
> It carries corpses unknown
> As some insignificant deaths
> Of local villagers.
> ("Community Near the River Bank" 7- 11)

The subaltern Dalit history interspersed with social injustice is a subject of concern raised by the poet. He looks at their narratives as "missing links"(18) and reaffirms that no history is complete without their story. As he puts it, "your blood unfurls that history". ("New Year Gift !" 16)

> Each passing moment where an untouchable dies
> In front of an elite,
> On the banks of the Ganges
> Pale skinned, the smell of death
> Eyes vacant and dull.
> ("New Year Gift!" 8-13)

The eyes belong not just to the oppressed, not only to the observer, the trite participant in the subjugation, but also to the oppressor who has been blinded and hardened by the continuous saga of cruelty. A single phrase provides multitudinous meanings to the reader. Sarangi subtly mixes poetry and politics together to raise pertinent concerns.

Yet the journey is not complete without a glimpse of a nether world,

> Roads take us to a mystic land
> Where shadows meet
> In a strange quarter of time.
> ("Someone Waits for Me" 1-3)

Sarangi's words at times carry on the flame that Mahapatra lighted. Glocal in both their outlooks, if Mahapatra circumscribed the larger world into Orissa, to Jagannath temple, to Puri saying

> At times, as I watch,
> it seems as though my country's body
> floats down somewhere on the river.
> ("Freedom" 1-3)

The same meaning is brought in by GajanMisra, another contemporary poet from Odisha who writes,

> I am getting lost
> In this place called Puri
> All roads lead to Puri.
> ("Getting Lost" 16-18)

To his readers, Sarangi flows from Dulong outwards. He is there

> Seeking for a guru
> Beside the mysterious Narmada.
> ("A Mirror" 12-13)

At the same time he is there with his uncle from Fermantle seeing boats paddling

> Floating between
> Residential suburbs of Perth.
> ("Black Swan" 5-6)

As his introductory note explains, he constructs a bridge between nations. We have to admit, rather successfully.

The postcolonial anguish turns into a celebration, reverberating the voice of the voiceless, not just of the Dalit subaltern, but also of a whole nation who dares to walk with its head held high. This celebration of the local culture through the global medium marks a proud moment, which can rarely be mistaken in his words.

> Today I write back
> Speak to you through my powerful pen
> Awards and crowns, all follow my way
> My being comes to completeness.
> I sign treaties and MOUs with metaphors of conquest.
> ("Writing Back" 10-14)

> I remain as a crow
> Time-keeper for oral tradition
> For centuries to come.
> ("Life Beyond" 18)

Jaydeep Sarangi's voice still resonates strong in *A Door Somewhere?*, breaking open a postcolonial anguish into pride, connecting two diverse continents through metaphors of love and narrating experiences from mundane to the metaphysical. He

instills in his collection, countless stories, every time reminding us that "You and I are in the story." ("Counting Beads"12). This is his story, his dreams and apprehensions andours too.

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