

Book Review

Jora Sanko: The Joined Bridge

Dr Madan G Gandhi and Dr Kiriti Sengupta eds.

(The Poetry Society of India, Haryana: 2014)

Reviewed by Ritika Batabyal

Jora Sanko: The Joined Bridge is a collection of poems in English by Bangla poets published by The Poetry Society of India in 2014. All the poets included in the collection are contemporary poets. The book endeavours to present a medley of ideas and views that rake the minds of the people in the contemporary society. The selection presents poems written by twenty one poets mostly from Bengal. The common thread that binds the poets is their concern about their contemporary society and the fact that all of them are Bengali poets who are writing in the English language. As stated in the beginning of the book by one of the editors, there has been a real dearth in the literary output of Indian writers writing in English. In this respect the book *Jora Sanko* is an exemplary compilation of poems written in English by Bengali poets. Kiriti Sengupta, one of the editors of the book, has stated that their aim was to compile select works of contemporary Bengali poets, works which are not translations but primarily written in the English language. Of the twenty one poets six are women poets. The poems present the new generation voice of the English language poets from Bengal. The poems discuss various issues which are part and parcel of the ‘modern’ society. Sometimes the poems discuss socio political issues that plague the life of the people in the ‘modern’ world and sometimes they present the predicament of the ‘modern’ individual and his responses to these problems. The first poet in this collection is Aju Mukhopadhyay and his poem “India The Mother” talks about the geographical vastness of the country and her diversity with respect to the flora and fauna and the people who reside here. He emphasises upon India’s ability to encompass everyone within her folds like a mother. The first few paragraphs of the poem are reminiscent of Rabindranath Tagore’s poem “Bharattirtha”. The poet says that the insiders are the real enemy of the country since they are corrupt and malicious. The poet is sure that Mother will be able to enforce unity among the diverse communities of people. Harmony and peace will reign supreme. The poem “The Events” talks about the banality of everyday life. How one event gives way to another and life moves on with more events coming and going. In one way the poem hints at the boredom of ‘modern’ life.

“Invisibility With Me” beautifully projects the poetic voice and the “invisible me”, who lives and accompanies the poetic voice in everything he does. At the end it is emphasised that this “invisible me” is our breath and therefore it is never severed from the self. “The Grasshood” is another poem that reveals the destructive nature of human beings on one hand and the humble and undaunted nature of the grass. The latter never dies in the face of man-made destructions like the nuclear arsenals. In contrast to this human beings die many times and finally realise that grass, earth, wind, water and fire are superior to man. “A Pair of Scissors” by Asit Maitra shows how the two blades of the scissor lead their lives sometimes staying together and sometimes separated from each other. In a way it reveals the lives of ‘modern’ men who are at times divided by their socio political views and at other times they are united to fight for a common cause. “Walking The Streets” brings out the pictures of different streets through which the poet walks on. The poet hints at the need to stop walking which signals the coming of old age. The poet knows he needs to walk on as it signifies he is alive. By walking along the streets the new times and the old days will coalesce. Bisnupada Ray’s “Coalition”, as the name suggests reveals the coalition between the opposing forces that governs a man’s life. Some forces are controllable while others are not. But man needs to take responsibilities as he is the only stakeholder in his survival. “Scarecrow” brings out the irony in the life of a scarecrow whose main job is to scare away the crows and birds. But seen closely the scarecrow is nothing but a tattered cloth wound around a stick. It has a painted face, no one takes care of the scarecrow who is left at the mercy of the winter frost that scares away its soul. Debjani Chatterjee’s poem “A Tribute to Mahmoud Darwish” is a short eight lined poem on the poet Mahmoud Darwish and his humanitarian nature. Jaydeep Sarangi’s poem “Baby Growing in A Poet” reveals how poetry comes into being. Just like death has different connotations at different phases of life so does poetry. Poems are composed like building a house where symbols are the bricks and stones. With the help of words the entire mosaic of life is captured in poetry. Ranadeb Dasgupta’s “Digital” captures the ‘modern’ world of digitization where silent buttons and the clicks of machines rules. Rudra Kinshuk’s poem “Pachyderms” reveals a world bereft with emotions where people are like rhinos, thick-skinned and low headed. The other poem “In A Bakery”, a five lined poem, has a pictorial effect. It portrays a burning hearth and the picture of doughs of flour and the fragrance of breads. Sanjukta Dasgupta’s “Chitrangada” and “Chandalika” are reminiscent of Rabindranath Tagore’s dance-drama. “Chandalika” hints at how society has stigmatised and deprived

individuals on the basis of their births. The last line of the poem brings out the changing times where people like Chandalika will not be ostracised by society. Sutapa Chaudhuri's "Maheyi" is a beautiful reworking of the Sita theme. Here Sita at last is consoled because she has returned to her Mother Earth and no one can separate her from her mother. "The Lights Of The Street Lamps" is a moving poem revealing the solitary life of the street lamps. They stand upright spreading light aimlessly among myriad memories of the day. This can be read in conjunction with the loneliness of the individual in a 'modern' society. Bina Sarkar Ellias's "A River" describes the river of her girlhood which has matured with time and reached the ocean which in turn has met the sky. The poem signals the maturity of human life from girlhood to old age. "Santiniketan 2" reveals the death of Rabindranath Tagore and the myriad emotions associated with it. "Dust" reveals the corruption in the 'modern' world. The ministers are busy amassing fortune and the nation has turned into a tumor. The last poet in this collection is Kiriti Sengupta. His poem "Memorandum Of Understanding" is a fitting finale. It emphasises that "air and age" are linked since eternity" and the sorrows of life revisit every human being at different points in life, the sorrows are not restricted to one individual and human beings need to understand this. This collection of poems is a remarkable one as it shows the entry of the new generation Bengali poets within the international scenario of the English language poets. The name of this collection, *Jora Sanko* is an apt one in this respect. Jora Sanko in Bangla means a joined bridge and the poets endeavour to join with the English-language poets in the international arena. Thus it tries to build a connected or joined bridge between the Bengali poets who are writing in English and the English language poets.