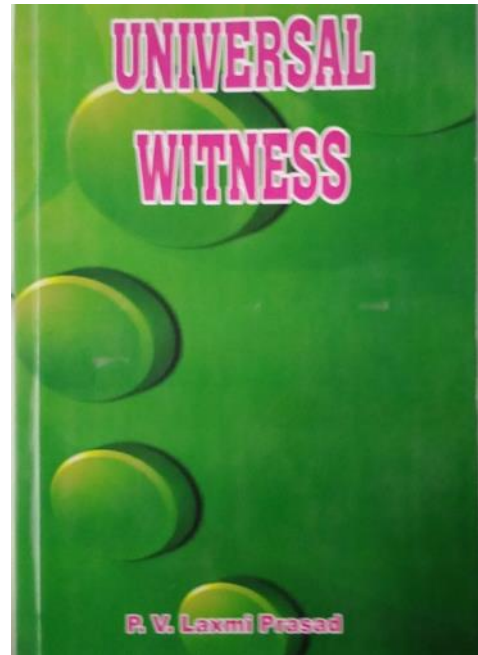


***Universal Witness* by P. V. Laxmiprasad, Thematic Publications, Latur,  
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Literature, in general, holds mirror to the society reflecting its issues and predicaments both objectively and subjectively. Among the diverse genres of literature, poetry seems to be more subjective because of often poets are kindled by their own life's experience and compose poems. However, their experiences have universal appeal and relevance and hence can also be considered objective. They represent the universal human quandaries and thus the poets become the representatives of the global citizens. P.V. Laxmiprasad emerging from Telangana, a southern state of India is one such poet whose poetry is the resultant of his own experiences mostly bitter, and they unflinchingly depict the throttling issues of his own generation in a poetic and philosophic way.



The scrutiny of the poems of Laxmiprasad unravels the different phases that a man's life evolves through. His poem "A Son Speaks" traces the childhood experiences which everyone irrespective of class, creed and society feels nostalgic about once they cross it. It is a eulogy on Prasad's mother. He glorifies motherhood and the sacrifices it does in order to bring up the children. He remembers with the sense of irretrievable loss how

She Carries Me in her womb  
Of safety,  
For Nine Magic months,  
Feeling, feeding and Talking,  
Thru Umbilical Cord –the Great  
Bond of Mystic Attachment. (6)

The unnecessary capitalization and short form of syntax that the poet undertakes to pen his poetry exhibits the fact how he intends poetry as a mere expression of his mind and the liberty he takes owing to its subjectivity. These lines are highly nostalgic and unfailingly depict the longing to escape from present turbulent life into his mother's womb which offers safety, protection and peace.

The poet also praises mothers as best teachers. "Dutiful as She/ She teachers the frontiers / Of Life to perfection / A flawless character I become" (7). The last four lines of the poem are highly relevant as they remind the youngster of their duty towards their aging parents. He writes: "When I was no burden, Hoe can you be burdensome? / I touch thy Holy feet in reverence / my dear Parents" (7). These lines proclaim the goodness of Prasad's poetic heart and it can be said that "A Son Speaks" is not just nostalgic but moralizing too.

The succeeding poems of Prasad show how from the safe womb, the poet comes out to encounter life on his own. Succinctly, like any youngster he too is puzzled by its intricacies and bigotries. This shocks and kindles him at the same time and the result was a couple of poems that he writes about these experiences which also have philosophical undertones. "Balance Sheet" is one such poem which reinstates the Indian philosophy that nothing in this world is under human control. A human being is entitled to live what is given to him/her. The poet is puzzled at his life going beyond his control. Hence he laments that life does not lead man "To lead cumulative calculations" (10). He is so astonished that he articulates that "To speak the truth/ Neither living nor dying / Ever breaks life mysterious, / Living to what extent and end" (10). These lines also suggest the hardships or the bitter experiences of the poet which made him look at life in astonishment and also worry what it has kept on its balance sheet after death.

Similar view of life is expressed in another poem "Curfew of Life". Here the poet laments the futility of human existence. It is presented in the question – answer form and very potently presents the troubles and turmoil of a human being living at the present scenario. He speaks about the lack of freedom, poverty which he describes as "hungry stomachs that fight for deaths" (13). Population, violence –ridden society where "Armed hands pointing / triggers at innocents" (13) , the problems of unemployment which grow so deadly like a " cancerous tissue"(13) and the very slow functioning of judiciary which denies justice at the needy hour. The society that Laxmiprasad paints on his poetic canvass is not at all an exaggerated version of the contemporary society but the very cruel reality and it depicts his social concern. The last

line of the poem is pertinent as it captures the result of all these social vices. All these make the present citizen “hate to love, hate to live” (13).

From the desperate mood of depression and futility, the poet slowly emerges and shows a sign of putting up a struggle to survive which is registered in the poem “Cycle of Life”. Yet amidst such to live, life seems to puzzle the poet. Living is perceived to its swimming and he poetically presents that

We live thru  
We swim to shore a life of risk and safety  
Into unknown and fathomless ocean of Joy and  
Sorrow  
We go into the sea of life,  
But we swim across life,  
Cut off by rising tides of passions  
Culminating into an Eternity of Life” (14)

In the second stanza the poet compares human life to that of a river which flows again and again into “the Ocean of Destination” which is God or spirituality which purifies: “a River of Purification/ that flows thru Body into Soul” (14). Next stanza compares life to that of Games where one tastes both victory and defeat, fortunes and misfortunes, which thrills and surprises at the same time. Here from the pessimistic mood the poet moves to the next phase of optimism which the spirituality seems to fill him with. Hence, he perceives that in life,

A winner wins out,  
A loser wins back,  
It is a game  
Into a life of surprises, sensations and wonders  
It is a Cycle of Life  
Into it Swimming, Flowing and Playing  
Meet to experience, to perfect and to liberate (14-15)

Life’s obstacles and futilities become a frequent theme with the poet. They remind him of his lack of freedom which becomes the crux of his poems.

Life is a constant source of scrutiny and interest to human beings. The poet also is caught in its enthralling web and it is one of the subjects of perpetual probing. Life provokes puzzles and

invokes him. Among the poems that capture this mood of the poet, “Human Life” is very significant. Here, Prasad calls a man as a tourist at an inn and during his sojourn he encounters all that is good and bad, happy and sorrowful. He comes across nostalgias and regrets and hence he calls life a “Blessing and Curse” (28). He goes highly philosophic like an ascetic in visualizing life as a journey which one undertakes “To pass into Nothingness” (28). Life, the poet calls is “Just a Conditional clause / Of life never allowed to “fill, to fulfill, to Complete/ For man to perish in the vicinity of Time” (29). These lines depict how the disappointments, disillusionments and regrets have enabled him to gain ascetic like maturity which strengthen him to face life as a temporary sojourn from which he will be redeemed soon.

Prasad also reminds his readers through the poem “Money, Money” that though money may seem to bring everything to a human being it cannot provide solace to one’s ailing heart. He apostrophizes money as “Dear Prime Mover of World” (55) but it never halts with one for long and hence it should be judiciously handles. The poem goes on to register the man’s greed to make more and more money. The poet’s contempt for the materialistic society gets exhibited here. He concludes his poems brilliantly by saying money may buy you everything but what one has to lose in the process of acquiring it is one’s own soul as money has the potentiality of robbing people of “of identities” as it is money’s “vocation at last” (55). This like a few other poems depicts his spiritual leanings.

The Indian belief in the life after death might have driven him to write a poem “Light of Hopes”. It opens new vistas to him. He envisages his life on earth as that of a lonely traveler walking along the desert “pumping shadows of despairs / hunting for thirsting Oasis” (45). But he does not yield to the test of time. But he musters up the courage to face these challenges which the hard life offers him. It makes him strong. The troublesome “sandstorms” of his life appears to him as “Stepping stones into promising shores” and he pens “I wait untired” (45). This poem can console many a grieving heart which struggles and stands awestruck at life’s hardships.

Thus the poems scrutinized here unravel the diverse experiences of the poet which molded him from a child to a great thinker and ascetic hoping for a better life. Life has been scrutinized the poet in its different dimensions. The poems are mainly invested on highlighting life’s problems and struggles, yet, they are not pessimistic. Even the poet is so dejected and even when all his hopes go shattered and withered, he consoles and convinces himself by believing that all these trials are just temporary and a better, peaceful and happy abode awaits him somewhere else.

This endows him with the strength to endure, emulate and excel. The the poet's personal experiences and emotions serve a great deal in strengthening and refreshing millions of such grieving hearts and minds and hence are commendable to be read and appreciated.