

Amar Nath Prasad's *Pebbles on the Seashore*: Vivid Images of India

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ABSTRACT

In 21st century, Indian English poetry presents vivid images of India considering socio-cultural realities of our time. Dr. Amar Nath Prasad's poem collection *Pebbles on the Seashore* also represents this truth. Without love and sense of beauty, human life becomes dry and mechanical. Nature is the great source of love and beauty. Dr. Prasad has considered it as the centre of his poems. Nature- environment is the lifeline for every living but human's lust for material progress harms nature. Dr. Prasad has highlighted it realistically. Love, nature and nation are very appealingly portrayed in his poems. The first poem of this anthology "The Priest of Nature" has been prescribed in B.A. Part II (Semester III) of Sant Baba Gadge, Amravati University, Maharashtra. A preliminary analytical examination of Amar Nath Prasad's poetry demonstrates his mastery of similes, metaphors, and other literary techniques, all of which he has skillfully and brilliantly employed. His combination of form and emotion is excellent, and it deserves critical acclaim, especially in this empty and constricting period when people feel so alone and alone. The poetry will undoubtedly turn out to be a comfort to the worries, fears, and hardships of contemporary, materialistic man.

Keywords: *Love, Woman, Farmers, Art, The Music of Nature, Childhood, The Dying Earth, Human Life.*

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Dr. Amar Nath Prasad is a well-known name in the contemporary field of Indian English writing. The rhymed poems in *Pebbles on the Seashore* by Amar Nath Prasad are arranged according to conventional prosody, rhetorical devices, and figure-speaking guidelines. The tone and temper of the poems are very poetic, metaphorical, and spiritual. A few of the symbols and pictures are intriguing. The book discusses a variety of contemporary issues, including the moral and spiritual collapse of contemporary materialistic man, his hollowness, his need for roots, culture, and heritage. Additionally, it depicts realistic images of farmers, warriors, the natural world, motherhood, persecuted women, the dying planet, ecological imbalance, the voice of awareness, childhood memories, divine life, the definition of art, a native hamlet, and the natural gifts. Additionally, a few famous and timeless quotes from notable poets have been boxed for easy access to the connoisseurs of art and literature. The poems that are presented here seem to be a natural continuation of that heritage, echoing with the everlasting voice that embodies both nature's exquisite response to man and his innermost desires. Another remarkable feature of this book is the metrical style that Dr. Amar Nath Prasad has selected for his poetry. Metrical compositions have somehow ended up being regarded either light-heartedly or with a level of non-serious dismissive gesture in the present poetry attitude. Writing in carefully constructed stanzas of measured lines and iambic pentameter is typically associated with a bygone age of intense emotion, akin to a rainbow-and-cuckoo scenario; in today's corporate society, digital writing seems out of place.

The collection of poems *Pebbles on the Seashore* by Amar Nath Prasad reflects the socio-cultural realities finely. Life becomes monotonous and mechanical when love and aesthetics are absent. Beauty and love are abundant in nature. It is the central idea of Dr. Prasad's poetry. Every living thing depends on the environment and nature, yet the human desire for material advancement destroys these natural resources. Realistically, that is what Dr. Prasad emphasized. His poem entitled "Love" very beautifully depicts the redeeming features of love which wins one and all. Actually, love is beyond the sickle of time and grows ever enduring with the passage of time. Against the ephemeral nature of life on the earth, here the feelings generated by love pass from generation to generation and outlive the so-called impregnable and all-powerful things on the earth. The thing to note here is that what we value most in life is bound to decay. The love cuddling, caressing and affection of mothers to their children can never be eliminated from the earth. It serves as an example of selfless love. Love is of various

kinds but common to all is one thing that it takes place the heart of the participants and therefore it hardly dies away. Love has got therapeutic and healing boat of properties alleviating the tortured heart and soul. The poet says:

Love can not be killed by lion

Neither by Death nor Time.

It is a flower that never fades

Always lives in its prime.

(Love, Pebbles on the Seashore, 37)

One can never buy love, one can win it with devotion. I am reminded her of an Indian classical drama called Mrichchhkatika by Sudraka which portrays the love story of a virtuous and worthy poor Brahmin called charudatta and a rich courtesan called Vasantsena. Despite the fact that the hero has nothing to offer, the heroine gave in the form of wealth, property, bank balance or any future security she is enamored of him because she has fathomed the magnanimity and generosity of his heart. Charudatta loved human beings and helped them all with his money to such in extent that he was reduced to hand and mouth. Even in his bad days he had attraction because he was an embodiment of virtues and nobility. So, we find that so long as this world continues Charadatta and Vasantasena shall be remembered as an icon of true and platinum love. Here in the present piece too, Amarnath Prasad pinpoints that love doesn't look for monetary consideration or power. This is a feat that Dr. Amar Nath Prasad's lyrics accomplish rather well. Learning this art is challenging. To explain the sentiments in beautiful lines, one must have some level of accomplished mastery over numerous metrical forms, sound properties of words, a sense of rhyme, and diverse other poetic devices. The way that Dr. Amar Nath Prasad has demonstrated a unique understanding of the melodic qualities of the English language and a natural comfort level with the skillful use of prosody is quite encouraging.

The poem, "What is Art" praises the worth of art in all forms in the life of human beings. No doubt poetry as a form of art is a very painstaking and pedantic . There is constant effort directed towards penning down something worthwhile in the form of poetry. The poet is of the opinion that Art is just like a golden bird that sings the eternal truth:

Art is a golden bird that sings

The song of truth in charming tone

It sings of present and of future

Things eternal of days by gone.

(What is Art. Pebbles,43)

To produce art and to appreciate art both require that you are collected and calm at heart. It is a matter of poetic connoisseurship. T. S. Eliot pointed out why poetry falls flat on critical touchstone. He put forward his observation that some poets are unconscious where they ought to be conscious, and conscious where they ought to be unconscious. In poetry you don't have to tell your own stories, you have just to say what is of everlasting value. And to do this gives the poet labor pain. This pain is worth undergoing because this proves trustful in the long run. Readers of poetry must churn out some valuable message from your poetry, that is the merit of great poetry. The poet rightly observes:

Poetry is the branch of art
Which fills the reader's heart with mirth
It gives the poet the labour pain
And only then it takes its birth.

(What is Art. Pebbles,43)

Art is not created for one class, caste, creed or religion. It focuses on humanity and that is why the artist has to keep in view the vast and varied people here. The poet has hinted this aspect of art also in the poem. And that is why he talks of not just art but true art. Keats felt that both truth and beauty are very valuable things on earth. Excluding these two fundamental ideas, the earth looks impoverished. He went to the extent of saying that this much is all that we need to know on the earth. That is why he felt that 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever'. The joy and mirth used in the poem here refer to the kind of sudden feeling of sublime transportation which true art is capable of producing. And this is where the poem takes us to both Romantic notion of creation in that it appeals to heart and classical notion of creation in that it necessitates the constant painful toil. In other words, both art and form are mingled together in this poem.

The poem, "The Music of Nature" captivates our attention not just because it has depicted the world of nature coming alive but for the flow of narration. One does not only read the poem one finds oneself standing before nature listening to the music produced by each and every phenomenon of nature. There are activities of birds and plants and blossoming and budding flowers in various hues and colors. Nature has got its bounty to offer but we are deaf to her offering sound. After all, for whom has nature bared her bosom. It is our deadly misfortune if we fail to get glimpses of natural surroundings. The poet says:

From mountains twins the sun is taking birth
The little birds are chirping in full mirth
New-born rays are showering like golden rain
Here life has only freedom-never chain.
(The Music of Nature, 36)

This web of life has ensnared us and we feel more and more bound to mechanized lifestyle. The poet is pained to see the plenty of nature and our indifference towards it. He has a message to give through this poem. And the message is very palpable as Rousseau, the great French Philosopher declared 'Go back to Nature'.

Childhood appears to be a poem of the immaculate purity of childhood. There is nothing to bother a child because the very period is a boon. The state of childhood is blessed with purity peace, joy, mirth, vivacity which cannot be substituted with anything howsoever precious. The poet has compared childhood to various objects of nature and the common things of day-to-day life. Most importantly the comparison "as bright as morning face" reminds one Shakespear's seven stages of men. The word 'morning' shows beginning of a day and metaphorically it denotes ample opportunities and prospects which childhood brings with. There is full potential here when a child can reach any goal on the wings of hopes, aspirations, struggles and innocence. Negative forces are not generally at play in this period. But the poet has laid bare the pangs of his heart too at the sudden realization that this period too is not going to last very long because it is natural course that time brings with its ensuing maturity which mars the innocence and purity of childhood. The poet sas:

Like mountain water I was fresh
As bright as the morning face.
With great delight I saw the moon
How my life was full of boon! (Childhood, 23)

But one thing appears clear that the joys and mirth of childhood remain with us so long we are alive. What pains is the nostalgia wistfulness of the gone by days when we shined in Angel infancy. One wants to tread back that ancient track where he left his glorious train. But the sins of the world weigh him down and a man feels staggering on the way like one who has drunk hard. Here Amarnath Prasad seems to be influenced by Vaughan. The noted Metaphysical poet observes:

But ah ! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk, and staggers in the way:-
Some men a follower motion love,
But I by backwater steps world move;
And when this dist. falls to the urn,
In that state I come, return.
(Vaughan, The Retreat, 165)

Amarnath Prasad is a noted author who has penned down several critical books apart from composing poems. Most of his critical books on Indian Writing in English, poetry, dramas and novels are widely accessed and sought on Amazon and Google by lovers of literature students, research scholars and teachers. There is to be found ample worth in his writing. Most of the poems from Pebbles on the Seashore have already been published as individual poems in “Metverse Muse”, a journal dedicated to rhymed poetry. In the hands of Amarnath Prasad we see rejuvenation and regeneration of rhymed verse. It is sad to see that today most poets take recourse to free verse, but Amarnath Prasad accepts the tremendous challenge of penning down his assertion of men and manner in proper form and content through metric composition. T.S.Eliot once said that art never improves but that the material of art is never quite the same. And I think that we should read and enjoy Amarnath’s poetry keeping in mind this Eliot poetic observation.

The collection has enshrined most sonnets like Shakespearean style. Amar Nath Prasad’s sonnet, “Those who never cheat” is concerned with the various aspects of the life of farmers. The poem clinches the issue with the final couplet implicating that farmers earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. How to batter, fatten and nourish each grain and salvage every pulp of plants in field are the major concerns of farmers unlike the so-called people who do nothing and thrive on others’ income. The poet tries to elevate the status of peasants at par with other members of the society who don’t deserve much but get paid highly. Through this poem, the poet exhorts us to acknowledge the contribution of peasants who workday in and day out to stuff our mouth with warm bread Imagine what would happen if such sons of soil cease sowing seeds in soil. Will all our efforts at globalization, industrialization bear fruits? The human society shall become hollow because the only reality is bread first. So, our farmers are unheard melodies and unheard soldiers whose invisible presence is very substantial for all of us. The poet says:

From dawn to dusk the peasant pours his sweat
He is brought up, dies in the lap of loan
He is caught ever in the net of Great Fate
In the hour of grief he does groan and moan.
(Those Who Never Cheat,3)

His other sonnet, “The Dying Earth”, a typical Shakespearean sonnet recalls to my mind the mythical bird phoenix which dies and is revived by its own ashes. The poet says that the earth suffers all sorts of pain but always gives us because its nature is something to give, and it cannot do otherwise. The earth accommodates all of us without any discrimination. The wounds of earth are repaired by nature’s changing course. So nature appears to us both as a blessing and as a curse. Earth produces edible things for all of us and thereby it sustains all life on the globe. The poet looks upon earth as a vital part of nature which is busy in imparting man’s fate. The adjective ‘dying’ used with earth denotes the sacrifice offered by Nature on behalf of man. The poem appears to be a reflection on man and nature in a very colloquial diction. On another place we can read ‘the dying earth’ as a metaphor for the suffering humanity caught in the mess of modern life. The life he pursues breeds him tension and boredom and ultimately, he has to return to nature for succor and solace. It is here that nature comes forward to embrace human beings. The poem opens with the quatrain:

Like ‘Kamdhenu’ cow nature is full of boon
Each and every thing hath something to say
The modern man will know her late or soon
How, for man, she is working night and day. (Pebbles, 10)

One of the most typical of Shakespearean sonnets in this anthology is which “My Dark Cave” presents human beings in a very beleaguered situation. Shattered by the tempests and tumults of life, a man has none to turn to but one’s own self. The cultivation of patience and self-love starts with man when all have left him. It is a stark reality that what man desires most in life, he is contented least by it. The poem turns a sort of invocation to the help of God to save man from the mayhem of the world. What you think is most necessary in life, you are rejected by the same by your friends, your relations, your dear and real ones, your wife, your husband. Now the question arises where one should go to if he has to exist in this world. Throughout your life, you have worked for others but of no avail because in the long run you have to face loneliness. So why not loneliness be a matter of celebration. Dedicate yourself to the will of

God and you will have nothing to repent. The world ‘cave’ is indicative of the aloofness of a man from the selfish world. This cave is dark and is lit up not from extraneous light but from the light within the man. Every man is a light in himself provided he arises in himself a “repining restlessness” to reach the kingdom of God. So the poem develops in a sense a religious ritual to worship at the altar of God. Godliness is not a feeling generated overnight but a “continual self sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality”. Such self sacrifice is worth undergoing because it cultivates in you a state of being where you remain unaffected by pain or pleasure. become an enlightenment in yourself and it stands with you in all bad circumstances. The poet observes:

Now I do feel thy patience which thou gave
Would give me the light in my dark cave. (My Dark Cave,12)

“The Dark Cave” seems to be influenced by W.B. Yeats poem “The Second Coming” which portrays the existing topsy-turvy character of the modern world. Disorder has become the order of the day. Corruption in all areas of life has reached to such an extent that innocence and nobility fight shy of the presence of evil elements in the society. It is very difficult to salvage one’s reputation amid his helter-skelter situations. What a tumultuous picture has been presented by W. B. Yeats:

Things fall apart ; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
(Yeats, The Second Coming,424)

So, Amar Nath Prasad has offered a very viable alternative to exist amid this situation. Though the cave is dark, but it is far better than the artificial light and pomp and show of this flimsy modern man’s life.

“The Thirsty Tree” is again a Shakespearean sonnet wherein he depicts much like E. M. Forster “Where angels fear to tread fools rush in” Again we find the worth and value of man being trodden upon in a society which is mismatched. Reward due to a worthy man is not being granted. The tree which is thirsty is actually the worthy man who deserves accolades and appreciation, but the society doesn’t recognise a hidden genius or talent in the form of saint or

seer. Despite the unhealthy atmosphere depicted in the quaitrain, the final couplet ends on a prophetic note much like Shelley hope of regeneration:

Worthy man is now a neglected dress
Which the young of today seldom wear
Now only the worst get the awards fresh
No reverence is paid to the great and seer.

(The Thirsty Tree, 13)

“The Path of Soul” depicts the virtues and nobility of a great soul by mind. Though the picture taken by mind from the outside the world gets imprinted on the soul and keeps disturbing it but great souls trans and the mundane and the monotonous to reach God. The greatness of a soul is also the greatness of the mine because it knows where has to go. So, great souls have a different terrain to chart luring in this worked. Milton has attached great significance to mind by which he feels that it is our mind which can town heaven into hell and hell into heaven. Here an remained of Andrew Marvell’s poem thoughts in a Garden where he takes about mind very artistically:

Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that’s made
To a green thought in a green shade. (Marvell, 43)

The poet wants to emphasise through words and comparisons like dismay, sandal woods, nectar, sweets and ‘smooth’ , ‘God’, ‘mind’, ‘soul’, blithe’, ‘joy’ etc that are treasures and not to be superficially found they are rather hidden within.

“The Sinking Boat” again reminds us of “The Second Coming” of Yeats. The recurrent theme is the growing impudence and stubbornness of the wicked people which threatens and intimidates the virtuous people. They lack high seriousness and ethical values and social etiquette. It pains the virtuous and the righteous to see that “the best lack all convictions, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.” The poet here deplores fast depleting of our culture in the face of Modern Scientific temperament. Indirectly he exhorts upon the modern man to ‘accept’ progress along with possessing the inherent culture, innocence and human concerns. Dr. Amar Nath Prasad rightly observes:

No one cares the loss of culture

No one dares to water and nurture.
Faith and belief are loosing ground
Folklore, dance are seldom found.
Culture is now a withered flower
Urgently needs irrigation or shower.(The Sinking Boat,17)

It is interesting to note here that the poem “Tribute to Soldiers” has been occasioned by the poet’s reminiscences of the days of his Army life. For our knowledge’s sake Amarnath Prasad served in Indian Army albeit for only a few years but it proffered him opportunities to see the steadfastness, dedication, discipline and patriotism of our soldiers which he tries to bring forth here in the fabric of poetry. Very beautifully he has delineated the tough and hazardous duty performed by our soldiers so that we may have peaceful sleep at home. The poet looks upon them with awe inspiration because they are our heroes whom we ought to revere and reward. The poet pays his tributes saying:

I bow my head to soldiers bold
Who lost their joy and mirth
With great respect my hands are fold
To salute their priceless birth.
(Tribute to Soldiers, 32)

The poem “How He Won His Love” is full of pathos, emotion, empathy and pangs as it dramatizes a lass forlorn on field waiting for some comforting hands to alleviate her pains. Away from the fleshly love bereft of any enduring values, the poet has presented the lover as a sympathiser and hearer of the problems of the beloved very genuinely and thereby endearing himself to her heart. Here we happen to get a glimpse of the Medieval French Romantic. The hero here too finds the ‘damsel in distress’ and comes closer to her.

Thus, a brief critical analysis of the poems of Amar Nath Prasad clearly shows the poet’s great command over similes and metaphors and some other poetic devices which he has very beautifully and skilfully used. His fusion of feeling and form is up to the mark, and it calls for critical appreciation particularly in the age of hollowness and narrowness where man feels quite segregated and alienated. The poems will certainly prove to be a balm on the cares and anxieties or the trials and tribulations of modern materialistic man.

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