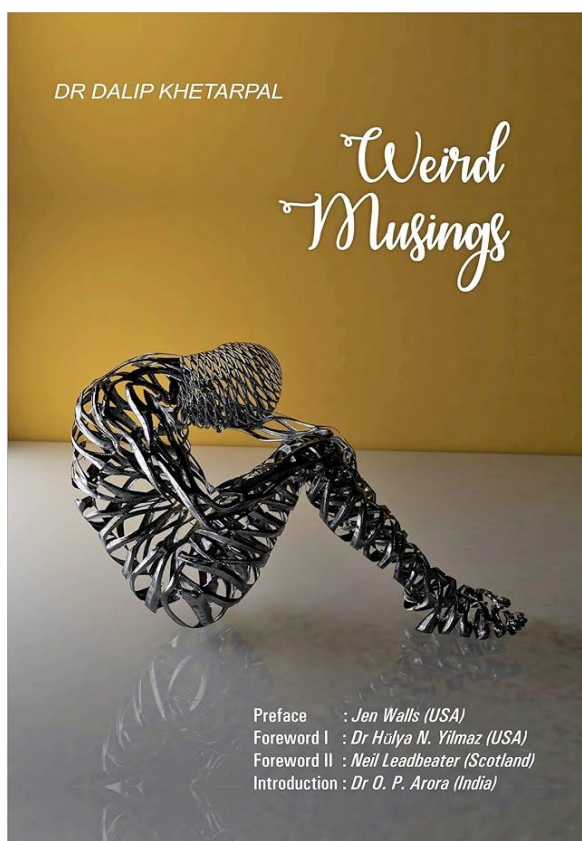


***Weird Musings* by Dalip Khetarpal, Global Fraternity of Poets: Hisar, ISBN: 978-9383755608, 2018, Pages-110.**

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Weird Musings by Dalip Khetarpal is a work of notable poetry that, with its title, might mislead the reader into thinking he has writings of some bizarre contemplations at hand. That is, when the generically implicit etymological meaning of the word “weird” is concerned. There is, however, nothing “weird” in this collection of remarkably articulated poems. Are they unusual? Yes. Unexpected? Yes. Enigmatic? Yes. Extraordinary? Yes, and yes again! In one poem after another, the author opens for his readership doors of a call for an understanding that is outside the expected; better yet, outside the too often confined. His invitation is here to stay. It is



up to each observant mind to be immersed in a thrilling journey, on which the path is filled with exceptional diction, content and thought processing.

Khetarpal coins the term “psycho-psychic flints” for *Fathoming Infinity*, his debut poetry compilation, as “they are flints because they emit sparks and hit the readers’ mind as a sharp-edged weapon does –thoughts being such.” The psychological disposition of the poems as well as how the author examines the human psyche and intuition are evidenced in the second, revised edition of the same entitled work. The author himself classifies his ensuing poetry collections, *Ripping into Consciousness* and *Refractions* as offerings of a multitude of foci, such as spiritual love, the soul and religion, the supernatural, myths

through their deception, life's mysteries, humanism and male-female relationships – inclusive of their sexual aspect. As for his *Sculptured Psyche*, it comprises poems that reveal the eternal search for a resolve of the discord between id, ego and super ego –the three components of the human psyche in the Freudian sense. This work, thus, brings to attention “deep-rooted complexes, illusions, delusions and false notions of various vital issues of life Man has fostered since the dawn of civilization (Khetarpal).”

In *Weird Musings*, the author provides his readership with a wide range of content and context, through which he surpasses his poetic art as unraveled in his aforementioned compendia. His contemplations on humanity within the complexity of its existential ordeals unearth a style of writing and a depth in thought that constitute a refined form of literary satire. This satirical stance highlights the contradictions of Man when its socio-religious convictions are concerned, none of which stands in harmony with nature. Thus, a large number of poems –including “Spurious Rise Leads to Real Fall”, “Big Pseudo-Gods Amongst Little Blockheads”, “How the Fake Emanates from the Real”, “Futile Queries and Epical Shrieks of a Few Anguished Souls”, “What and Where Is Character?” and “Limitations Reign Supreme . . .” raises awareness to falsities embraced among and by humans. The contradiction within which Man relates to God also holds true for its interaction with nature, as the author stresses in his poems as a vital point to consider for clarity of the mind and for understanding the self. “Beauties of Nature Are Nothing but Our Perception” and “Cataclysm: Reverse Motion of the Earth or Human Brain?” are only two examples to read closely in order to do justice to the deeper meanings of the authorial message.

In this collection, the poem, titled “Inscrutable”, Dr. Khetarpal raises the age-old question about the validity of religion within the context of the crimes, the so-called “sins”, a theist as well as an atheist is capable of committing against humanity. Being blinded by faith is the authorial insight that unites all stanzas amid much exemplification, which is a prelude to intellect's demand: “Whatever one claims to be, / His faith in heaven is infirm / As his faith in hell, in essence. / Inscrutability must then, reign supreme. Vagueness of vision of both still persists[p. 54]” With the confidence his observations enable him, the author asserts that “pretentiousness and hypocrisy / Are really innate in man”. Among many others, the fifth poem, “Death & Resurrection – Ultra-Modern Style” harmonizes with ‘Inscrutable’ in its content. However, this one, overtly assumes a sardonic tone with its references to the power of modern-day social media and electronic communication at large: “FB succeeds where doctors and medical sciences fail / To resurrect or revive humans![p.

13] Cell-phone succeeds where gods and destiny fail / To decide the life and death of humans! [p. 14] Christ's resurrection is still unclear, / But resurrection through FB operators is galore . . . experienced and witnessed by many."

It is not only humanity's self-confining and self-deceiving conceptualization of religion and self-deception at large, or its entrapment within the self-restraining and self-betraying dead-ends of the electronic world that the author brings to the attention of the reader. He also provides direct insight into his highly edifying deliberations when secular content is concerned. At least in appearance –with no disrespect to his underlying thoughts of a much more sophisticated caliber, Dr. Khetarpal dwells on worldly love and the male-female dynamics. With regard to these two life matters, he arrives at his intentionally inconclusive conclusions by means of spiritual love. His poems, "Consummation of Love . . ." and "Re-Calibrating Monogamy and Polygamy" are but two examples. The author brings to surface one other question of secular nature that needs a serious examination by the intellect –once again, he does so in a sardonic tone. "Why Do Stars Affect Only the Hindus?" based on Mythological traditions. is one of the poems with such focus. While religion seems to be the point of concentration in this poem, the author's observations reach far beyond the boundaries of religious missions. He unveils his examinations of "old mythologies", in which "stars influence and shape / The destiny of mankind" and then questions their teachings where "Luck and chance play their role / In molding one's destiny". He does not leave the argument there, however, but rather asserts in an authoritative voice: "But not always." and continues to argue how "the uncontrollable / Luck and chance, on rare occasions, do interfere. / Struck by stars, this eludes the Hindus, / Struck by mythology, reality eludes them / And struck by illusions, they become dreamers".

The author's humanist worldview, concern for humanity's present and future, Man's existence at large and the poet's existential crisis unravel through several poems of this collection, such as "Thunder and Plunder Face-Book C/O Narcissists", "Vodka Vis A-Vis India", "Is Reality Real?" and "Poets and Poetry. With his "Thunder and Plunder Face-Book C/O Narcissists", he succinctly offers a definition of today's global society, without mincing his words: "Narcissists, in ordinary life are generally perceptible / When observation is keen. / But even sans keen perception, / They could easily be perceptible / When face-book account is switched on." He does not end his societal judgment there, but rather goes on to arrive at the following sentiment:

Thanks to the face-book creator for infusing new life
Into infinite narcissists and promoting their inane cause!

Strangely, equal praise is elicited
By both the ugly and beautiful,
The stupid and the intelligent,
Proving how ingratiating praises are also so false.
But the plethora of compliments and praises
Chokes the helpless, yielding face-book.
Surfeited with such wild invasion and encroachment
It has been ailing with seeming vibrancy since its creation,
Ailing also, all its well-meaning sensible and intelligent users.
Does not all this seem to be a vain-gloriously orchestrated plan?
Narcissism rules where hapless face-book surrenders!

In “Vodka Vis A-Vis India”, a humor-filled poem, Dr. Khetarpal satirizes the notoriously famed concept of “a melting pot” within the context of cultural entities, singling out India as the most disadvantaged by its attempt to melt multiple groups of people into one entity:

Vodka hangover ceases
After a short while,
But the hangover surging from
Assorted communities and cultures
Shall never cease,
Will persist for all times to come.
The melting pot has not melted countries
Like America and Canada
Into any meltdown,
But has surely melted India
Into a chaotic nation
To go down further.
A small melting pot of Indian society,
Fostering the biggest democracy
Though is somewhat tipsy,
Is also surely in topsy-turvy.
Strangely, the existent and vibrant India becomes ineffectual
With a blend of many communities
And ethnic groups,
But the lifeless vodka, more effectual
With a blend of all variant brands of drinks.

Amid such a humorous approach to the world-wide dilemma of mixing of people into one another, the author diverts his attention also to a philosophical reckoning. “Is Reality Real?” is one exemplary poem in this regard:

Man or society is volatile and dynamic

And changes every fraction of a second,
Generating new reality or truth
Every fraction of a second,
Continually escaping the grasp of man,
Making the world more complex and incomprehensible
With each second of change
In all spheres of life.
Life indeed, becomes weird, but exquisite,
'cause of the elusive and mysterious
Facade of reality.
What could be then real
When reality is not real!

This existentialist poem may be considered as the precursor of “Poets and Poetry”, in which the author tends to the self-burdening demands of his craft: The poet’s eternal quest. He yields to the speeding pace of this age-old existential struggle in seemingly simple yet heart-wrenching words from the soul:

A writer who has failed to get his unheard self unread,
His craving to be appreciated or eulogized
Receives an irremediable dent. (24)
A minor poet, especially,
Wallows in the fake glory of a fool’s paradise.
Extricating himself from this rut is not only painful,
But suicidal also, for a self-glorified poet
Sees and knows not
What he really is!
Pitiable and aesthetically tragic
That even a great creative artist
Has sometimes to live even in fool’s paradise.
But, do we have to survive by wallowing in illusions?
Is this the way this ignorant prejudicial world goes on?

In view of all his Weird Musings, it is not at all a difficult task to reassure Dalip K. Khetarpal how worthy of a careful read his poetic art is. That is, without neglecting to equip oneself with a strong sense of appreciation one intrinsically possesses due to this rare opportunity and privilege of the mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual awakening his verses deliver.