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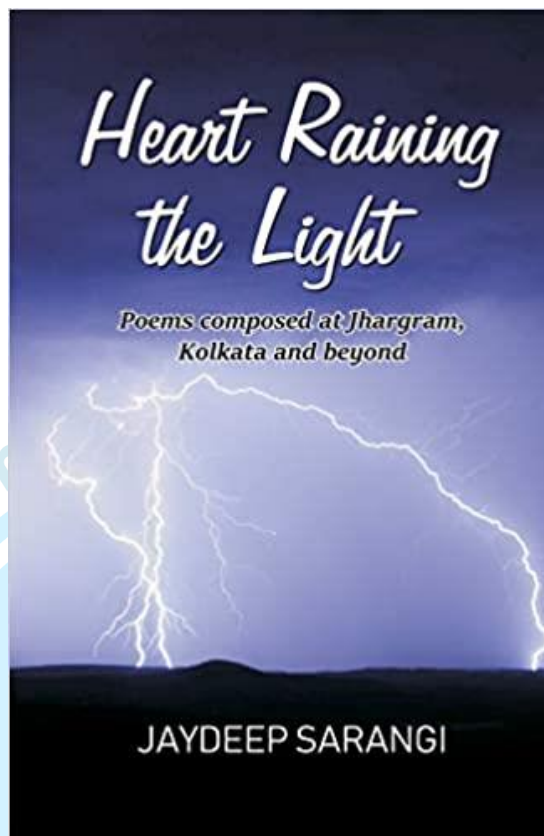
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Heart Raining the Light: Poems composed at Jhargram, Kolkata and Beyond by Jaydeep Sarangi

Reviewed by Sutanuka Ghosh Roy



Title: “Heart Raining the Light: Poems composed at Jhargram, Kolkata and Beyond”

Author: Jaydeep Sarangi

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Jaydeep Sarangi is a bilingual poet and a seasoned academic anchored in Kolkata. Sarangi has been widely anthologized with seven collections in English, the last two beings-: *To Whom I Return Each Day* (2017) which was released at the University of Uine, Udine Italy, and *Faithfully, I Wait* (2017) released at Flinders University, Adelaide. He has read poems on different shores of Australia, Asia, Europe, and North America. His poems have appeared in many prestigious magazines like *BTR*, *Transnational Literature (Australia)*, *Muse India*, *Indian Literature*, *Kavya Bharati*, *Pegasus*, *WEC*, *The Asian Age*, and *CV*. He has delivered the keynote address in conferences/seminars on new poetry in different Universities in India and abroad. He is the founder of Secretary, Intercultural Poetry and Performance Library at ICCR, Kolkata. He is the Founder Vice President, Guild of Indian English Writers Editors and Critics, Kerala.

Heart Raining the Life Poems composed at Jhargram, Kolkata, and Beyond is a slim volume of poems published by Cyberwit.net from Allahabad, India. The title immediately draws attention to the topographic reality while 'beyond' is subtly juxtaposed with two other places Jhargram and Kolkata, adding an abstract sphere to it. The opening poem of the anthology "Travelling with My Poems" sets the tune and connects the readers. "My poems are with the kite runners, /small dream goes big in the high sky. Readers /are my runners, soul makers" (9). The lines have a sacerdotal quality which shows that the poet is undertaking a journey within. Sarangi's journey is embellished with learning's of life "Every evening I learn /many things in these big sal trees/There is a poem/ for each one of them/ all homeward birds, after the day's toil/ I follow them close, green after green" (10). He weaves a dreamy yarn around him, the fibre is Nature. The texture is green. The poet reminds us that the last recourse of human beings is Nature. In today's rat race we often forget Nature and move towards the material comfort but that ultimately denudes us and Nature heals. It is when one finds his/her haven in Nature one can learn the "alphabets of time". Nature is at its best in Jhargram (a district in the Southern part of West Bengal known for its dense forest and rain, old temples, and royal palaces)—the poet's place of origin. The poem is in free verse and is rich in imagery.

Sarangi's verses remind us of the current trend of voicing a poet's response to the landscape of his/her origin, his/her sense of the tradition and culture, and many other factors that go together to make him/her assume an identity of his/her own. We find this trend among the contemporary Indian English poets-- Jayanta Mahapatra whose verses are often region-specific but his poetry represents the nation as a whole. Orissa constitutes the core of Mahapatra's poetry. Mamang Dai's poetry depicts her deep and passionate attachment to the land of North East of India. Legends, history, and myths associated with these places constitute the central theme of her poetry. In this context, one also remembers Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri*. The Orissa landscape- with Puri and Konark occupying a conspicuous position- has a strong presence in the poetry of Bibhu Padhi another contemporary poet born in Orissa. To use Rilke's phrase these poets "make glorious---everything they see" (*Anthology*, 54). These Indian poets have made the local the global. While Sarangi undertakes his journey within, he is quite clear about the "purpose of his living" "I am no shape, no form. / Comrades in suffering/ keep me awake, grasping /old night's hunger/ after this poem" ("Purpose of Living" 12).

He stands in front of the mirror of life and finds it "tall and brutal" he "endures all hurt "with phone calls "unanswered" (33). He finds solace in the "Dulung" (a rivulet in Jhargram) "The myth of sleep and our losses/reek of old folks, and that link/with forefathers lying near the rivulet/Dulung holds them tight" (35). With the teachings of life and Dulung following him like a shadow, he comes to Kolkata "The City of Joy". Kolkata commandeers its own narratives. Sarangi's verses display a fascination for the magical and the grotesque of the urban. "The Ganges holds truth/the last blade of green grass. /let them not fall waste. /Travelers give them names. /We carry on. / all roads lead to Kalighat" ("The City of Joy" 53). The city comes alive in startling images. The *ghats*, the railway lines, *Durga Puja*, old temples, the banks of River *Ganga* where he witnesses the funeral rites as well as the celebration of life are crayoned in words. The symbols, the metaphors, the rich imagery are etched in simplicity. Few of the images are innocuous. Kolkata is a living entity as it anatomizes politics and passion with precision and intent.

He gets under the city's skin. "In a sea of salt, / skeletons of ships carry mysteries. /All parts quietly wait/to be uncovered, skull after skull" ("History is Mystery" 22). The city affects him as a conscious citizen and the poet voices his concern for the *other* in society. He now

focuses his lens “beyond” “Jhargram” and “Kolkata”. Sarangi remembers a real-life hero who dedicated his entire life for the upliftment of the subjugated, the *dalits*, the weaker strata of society. “His display of disdain /shines sword in conflict with avarice. /Walls he broke with a hammer, / veils lifted, pots of water for all” (“A Gifted Hero B.R. Ambedkar” 20). Meena Kandaswamy another contemporary Indian English poet is also a voice of resistance against the atrocities meted out to the subjugated. Indian society has programmed the understanding of *Dalits* in such a way that they do not understand the reason and meaning for their subjective reasons. The so-called unity of Indian nationhood has allotted them a *different* space. It is the *Dalit* women who bear the brunt for they are doubly marginalized, “My window is a small space/My community is my city/My joys are not yours/My pains are distinct./My walls know my stories./My prison has a different name/My autobiography, strong binaries”(“Dalit Feminism” 56). The repeated use of sibilant sound(s) is integral to the stylistics of the poem.

Raphael d’Abdon, Poet, academic based in South Africa writes “Poetry explores the countless connections that exist between the writer and the seen and unseen forces that surround him. Jaydeep Sarangi’s book, *Heart Raining the Light* succeeds in creating a language for these spiritual dialogues, and landscapes where “We said adieu to set our rivers free”, the reader’s curiosity and imagination “fly with crafted wings / Busy with saplings green”. “Evocative, elusive landscapes, which I will visit over and over again (91)”. Rain and river are like sequins in Sarangi’s poetic *oeuvre* which tugs a chord in the heart. He speaks of Shiva and Lorca, he walks “pass Pompey’s pillars” and befriends “Serapis”, he gropes for the “Roman Egypt” (24), hears “Lazarus calling” (47). Sarangi the wordsmith keeps on writing his “dreams in silence” (57) and finds that “everything in this world is political” (58). He keeps his door ajar, “There is only one river, hills to oceans/a door full of light and love/here, and beyond” (74). In the end, his “heart leaving family fables/and the thesaurus of silence/tirelessly seeks the old sun. / Somewhere, beyond a known order” (90) he wants to become “a river” (14). Sarangi succeeds in creating euphony.

Heart Raining the Light carries in its pages the stamp of the extraordinary. It is a collector’s item and will leave its imprint in the literary map of Indian English poetry and beyond.

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BIO-NOTE

Dr. Sutanuka Ghosh Roy is Assistant Professor English in Tarakeswar Degree College, The University of Burdwan, WB, India. She is currently engaged in active research and her areas of interest include Eighteenth-Century Literature, Indian English Literature, Postcolonial Literature, Australian Studies, Dalit Literature, Gender Studies, etc. She has published widely and presented papers at National and International Seminars. She is a regular contributor to research articles and papers to anthologies, national and international journals of repute like *Muse India*, *Setu*, *Lapiz Lazuli*, *The Statesman*, *Life and Legends*, *Kitaab* etc. She has guest-edited the July 2020 Issue of SETU on Children’s Literature. Her poems have been anthologized and published in *Setu*, *Piker Press*, *Harbinger Asylum*, etc. The title of her book is *Critical Inquiry: Text, Context, and Perspectives*. She is also a reviewer, a poet, and a critic.

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