

**Book Review of Pulkita Anand's *we were not born to be erased we were not born to be erased: an eco-poetry collection***

by

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Pulkita Anand, *we were not born to be erased we were not born to be erased: an eco-poetry collection*, Authorspress, 2023, 98 pages, ₹295, ISBN 978-93-5529-901-7

Pulkita Anand's *we were not born to be erased* is an engaging and relevant anthology of eco-poetry that goes beyond simple observation, transforming into an ardent call for ecological awareness. This work resonates with both the immediacy of our ongoing climate crisis and the vulnerable natural environment, encompassing the perspective of the Indian landscape and cultural heritage. Anand's voice, as emphasized by the varied viewpoints showcased, is both impactful and layered, capable of stirring a range of emotions from sorrow to optimism. The title of the book speaks aloud for the sentient beings who have been extinct from our planet. The cover of the book is also designed in a way that keeps nature at the forefront. The collection opens with a hymn to the Earth from Atharva Veda. The collection is woven with the lines of eminent poets from India and abroad. The book is beautifully interspersed with pictures of trees, plants, animals, insects and rivers. It seems that the reader is reading the book in the ambience of the natural landscape.

The strength of the anthology lies in its capacity to effortlessly merge the lyrical elegance of nature with the harsh truths of its peril. In the poem entitled, "The fire of Khejri lit Chipko" the poet highlights the sacrifice made by the savours of trees:

Bishnois let out to die.  
Then, let a tree die.  
Khejri Tree, a treasury  
A rule they apply,  
They comply  
Cutting it, they deny.  
"A chopped head is cheaper than a chopped tree,"  
they cried.....

The poem displays vivid imagery, emotional depth, and application of repetition for emphasis. Expressions like "Chip, chop, drip, drop," "death dance of the trees," and the repeated mourning of "The valley echoed/The song echoed," paint a striking image of the conflict and the community's steadfast dedication to safeguarding their trees. The recurrence

of this phrase effectively underscores the devotion, passion and commitment of the community.

The poet hits us with a shaft with these lines:

Do you remember Nature....?

What if Nature forgets you...?

The rhetorical questions rock the mind and make us mull over the crisis. Anand's understanding of Indian flora and fauna enriches the poems with a distinctive and lively viewpoint as: *Kaner, Parijat, gulmohar, kadam, kejri, jamun, babool, Maluka, maina, muniya etc.* The poem entitled, "Rivers recital" traces the journey of various rivers in India. It beautifully delineates their stories. It poignantly ends with their plight of becoming a nallah in this commercial world. This close relationship with particular ecosystems changes abstract ideas of climate change into concrete, personal encounters. She doesn't merely discuss global warming; she illustrates vivid images of endangered species and vulnerable landscapes, rendering their possible disappearance profoundly personal. In the poem "Ode to Mango," one finds a relishing treat:

    Totapuri Or Alphonso,

    Kesar or Dashehari

    Chausa or Badami

    Safeda or Langra

    Raspuri or Amrapali

    Mankurad or Pairi

    Gulab or Rumani

There is a catalogue of different birds in the poem, *Ave*:

    Oh! Grey-headed canary, take me to your aviary

    Away from noisy babbler, warbler, barbet, brahminy starling

    Coursing through desert courser, cruising goose

    Ibis, Cormorant rent in water

    Snipe, are fruits ripe?

The poet's method is adaptable, incorporating a range of poetic styles and tones. As indicated in the book's description, the poems range from brief, evocative lines to more extended, narrative works, including prose poems. This variation in form demonstrates the intricacy of the subject matter, enabling Anand to investigate the complex relationship between humanity and nature. She takes on a more critical tone, contemplating the damaging effects of colonialism, industrialization, and unrestrained consumerism. In the poem entitled, "Dear Colonizer" there is a poignant satire embedded in every line:

    With your civilisation mission, you moved

to mock, muck, and measure your treasure.  
By the way, who told you, “You were civilized?  
Your father, your queen, your queen God?”  
Dear, Oh! Dear, look what you did,  
It’s sheer savagery. Even Nature  
is crying for your cruelty....

The poet draws attention to nature’s concerns and highlighting them in a manner that captivates the reader’s focus. This is especially clear in her application of figurative language, which allows the Earth (dear m(an)imal poem) and its creatures to express themselves (Obituary poem). By taking on the viewpoint of a victim, Anand fosters a strong feeling of empathy, encouraging readers to acknowledge their own part in the persistent environmental crisis. The poems “Modern Godmen” and “Selfish Giants” are a scathing satire on modern men’s deeds. The poet asks:

Where are the teachers and preachers  
Where are the gurus and yogis  
Where are the Sufis and saints  
Where are the magic and mantras  
Where are the sutras and strictures  
Where are the books and rooks

This beautifully woven piece of literary art was mentioned in one of the research papers of the Sage publication. Though the style of the poet is familiar and convincing it’s uncertain. The language of the poems is simple yet at times the reader stumbles at difficult words. A foreign reader might find it taxing due to Indianised words as an Indian reader finds it taxing to read a foreign work. The tone of the poems is variable. It is at times satirical, at times comic, at times imploring, often time lamenting and pondering. The collection will help an eco-conscious reader who wants to garner information regarding different Indian environmental facets. It seems to be a carefully researched work knitted in the form of poetry. The collection ends with a rhetorical question, “You care for her, aren’t you?”

*we were not born to be erased* is a significant and timely anthology that goes beyond the limits of conventional poetry. It stands as a formidable affirmation of art’s capability to shed light on the pressing issues of our era and motivate substantial change. By integrating lyrical elegance, cultural richness, and steadfast advocacy, Anand has produced a piece that is both a mourning and a summons to act. This anthology is intended to be not only read but also felt and absorbed. It compels us to acknowledge our connection to the natural environment and accept our duty towards our planet.