

Book: In Sacred Moments

Poet: S. L. Peeran

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Book Review

S L Peeran's tenth collection of poems *In Sacred Moments* comes as an aroma of fresh air with a refreshingly new dialect and expressions. Despite the articulation of pragmatism, well-nigh powerful emotion rushes forth with a torrential gush. The poet is holding the contemporary mirror up to our face and telling the truth in all its candour. This collection of Peeran appears as a holy scripture in this unholy world. At the risk of being labelled as unctuous I am forced to say that the poems are visibly the distilled essences of the poet's personality, couched in simple and unpretentious diction coupled with an admirable clarity. This gifted Indian bard sings the hymn with intense emotion. His spiritual vigilance sets tone to attain salvation. The philosophical, mythical and mystical undercurrents reflect his unflinching faith in God. The poems of this collection cover a broad spectrum of emotions and unshakable belief in God. However, his sustained humanistic approach and conviction towards spiritual healing are quite prominent in this anthology. The intrinsic individualism of Peeran is evident from his conviction embodied with prudent personality. Despite being a divine messenger, Peeran's spiritual feeling rushes forth with a torrential gush. His hefty credence on propagating the mighty force of divinity is apparent in this collection.

Majority of poems of this book deals with God's magnanimity and magnetism. Indeed, Peeran vents out some of his wide experiences of life, harvested from a habit of deep reflection and detached surveillance especially from the vantage point of his professional life.

The volume, *In Sacred Moments* comprises of 58 poems on a variety of themes- spiritualism, benevolence, humility, helplessness, hope, humanity, love and so on. The poet's faith on Satya, Shiva and Sundara is exquisite and effective. His treatment of body and soul brings back to our memories the solid picture of spiritual awakening. He sounds highly democratic when he talks about humankind, republic day, love, senseless leaders and so on. This collection will undoubtedly be a valuable contribution to the catalog of contemporary Indian English poetry.

The signature poem "In Sacred Moments" speaks of the obsession, confession and submission of the poet before the almighty. With the introduction of the mythological

characters like Adam and Satan, the poet depicts the Adamic disobedience and satanic evil-mindedness of modern men. Humility, submission, truthfulness, patience, soft and kind to others, courteous to the near and dear people are the hallmarks of his poems. "Humanity and Submission" displays all these virtues.

S. L. Peeran is noted among his contemporaries not only because of his personality but also because of his aesthetic merit. Dr. Shujaat Hussain in her introduction justifiably considers the poems of *The Sacred Moments* as "sequentially related, simple but startling, soul searching, pacifying, fecundity in art, literally moving and moulding." (Hussain-Intro.ix)

Realisation of one's own mistake is perhaps the biggest ever punishment that one can think of in life. The sting of conscience for the errors committed by human being compels him to surrender before the lord for forgiveness. He further appeals his master, God for benediction and urges to stimulate his dropping and supine spirits:

O Master, Can I have your glimpse.

To lift my sagging spirits, enlighten soul. (Enlighten Soul p.2)

In "Humility and Submission" the poet speaks about the attribute of human being. Mundane complexities like pride, anger and ego are predominant in human nature. He who confronts against all such evils with humility can surmount all odds of life. He further urges people to be humble by nurturing the inner traits like truthfulness, gentility, sympathy, empathy, patience, and civility. He is of the opinions that surrender before God can redeem such bad qualities.

"Judge Properly" is a poem that alerts people to be judicious before undertaking any action in life. The flitting conscience often puts human being in dilemma. Being impulsive, sometimes we commit mistakes resulting ill consequences. It is almighty who comes forward to shower mercy over the ill-fated human being. Therefore, to be a perfect individual one should keep him above earthiness, profanity and all foul deeds in life. In Peeran's words:

"You need to read the weather,

Before you play with your kite

For strong winds is sure to break

The strings you hold, to tear it down" (Judge Properly p.12)

"Sorrows in Prime of Life" is but a sonnet that reminds us to be dutiful and hard working to get success in life. Indeed, the success of a person depends on the quantity and quality of effort he puts in getting the work done. The fitting adage 'as you sow so you reap' stands apparent from the lines-

He needs to churn the milk to get butter.

Suck the nectar million times for honey.

Till, plow and show for a good harvest.

Be smithy to give shape to an iron" (sorrows in Prime of Life p.14)

In “A Grim Picture” Peeran delineates the gradual decay of physical ecstasy. The edifying lines of the poem make us conscious about different means of treatment. The poet is warned about his physical problem but he has no regret whatsoever as he assumes the descending of heavenly body to lift him up after his death. He further alarms the human being about the stark realities of life i.e. death which is inhabitable and unstoppable.

The existential philosophy of the poet is quite prominent in his “Golden Heart”. He is of the opinion that God remains in the sanctified and righteous heart but not in any structured building. In other words disinfected hearts are the dwelling place of God.

“...God can’t be found

In hills, mountains, plains and Temples,

Mosque, churches, gurudwaras and synagogues,

But only in sublime, purified golden hearts” (Golden Hearts p. 28)

“Saga of Life” illustrates the temporary pleasure of the celebration of marriage for the brides’ parents during marriage time but permanent pain for the rest of their life as if they are destined to suffer. However birth, marriage and then death are the usual phases of life that one has to go through customarily.

In “Senseless Leaders” the poet is perplexed to see attitudinal deformity of our political leaders who are indulged in scams and criminal activities instead of addressing the serious issues concerning the livelihood of the destitute farmers. He further invokes God to bless them with good sense:

O Lord! Bless our senseless leaders.

Prevent another Bofor’s scam.

Let our funds be used for irrigation.

Save poor populace from being perished. (Senseless Leaders p. 39-40)

The poet’s heart aches to get the benediction of his master and therefore he says:

O My Master, do not

Forsake and shun me.

My heart is a honey-combed love. (O Master! P. 55)

The utopian thinking of the poet is noticeable in “Paradise”. He conceptualizes ‘oneness in all’ and desires to see people sharing happiness and joy with each other, parting all the trials and tribulations; sorrows and suffering of life. He does not want to see the lost paradise rather a paradise regained with bliss and gratitude.

“Cringing Times” is the last poem of this collection that portrays the hopelessness and desperation of the poet in his old age. With the frail physicality, timid mental fragility and voice quivering, the poet desperately longs divine support.

My wings are clipped.

I am a wingless bird;

Without sharp beak or teeth;

With sore feet, crippled. (Cringing Times, p 66)

S.L. Peeran's poems are stunning, not simply because of their powerful subject, but for the images such as sun, moon, dark, night, cloud etc. The simplicity of diction and plausibility of enunciation is very arresting. His range of study and exercise of intelligence are overtly visible when he cites the characters like Adam, Satan, Arjun, the great characters of two great classical epics *Paradise Lost* and *The Mahabharata*. Indeed, the appropriate use of Islamic and Hindu dialects and the suitable words chosen in this collection establish his maturity as a poet. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this righteous collection. This anthology will certainly touch the readers' sentiment and win their approbation.