

**SALIENT ECHOES FROM *ECHOES SILENT* BY K.V.RAGHUPATHI**

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Dr.K.V.Raghupathi is an academician of India who has been writing poetry in English for many years. Voice of the Valley, Wisdom of the Peepal Tree and Echoes Silent are some of his well known long poems. There are elements of spirituality, philosophy and shrewd introspection in his poetry.

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"What I may call those years in my life like  
the faded scarlet poppies on the chest of  
mountains

From the stems hanging with slithery  
support." (p.9)

The above lines flag off "Echoes Silent" by K.V. Raghupathi. Abruptly begun, they raise a question in the minds of the readers as to what those years are, why they are like the 'faded scarlet poppies' and why they hang 'slithery support'. The note of disillusionment runs through further in:

"Those doomed years may I call  
Those painful years may I sum up  
Those utilityless years may I speak." (p.9)

'The mystifying clouds of memories', that deep-stuck decayed matter', 'worm-eaten experiences', 'white smudged bones' are unveiled shortly later when the poetic speaker sees his childhood years closely, intently, curiously, 'like an

archaeologist' who digs into the past to remove those hidden fossils and study them to unravel new truths.

The 'I' persona explains how he has grown confused, entangled in a world of hypocrisy. 'In the masked infinite masks flown'. He reminisces these memories while sitting

'..... cross-legged, maudlin,  
In the white illuminated building, in late October  
To my chair confined I am but unchained  
Like a hermit in the woods I pose.' (p.9)

This recalls to one's mind the following lines from Wallace Stevens' 'Sunday Morning'

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late  
Coffees and oranges in a sunny chair,  
And the green freedom of a cockatoo  
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.

The speaker, as a child cared everything in the world of nothing 'Like a thorn in the bush in the world of



everything'. He slowly begins to train himself, attaining maturity in his growth.

'I told myself "no" to some things,  
"Yes" to some things,  
"Not" came slowly and steadily like the copious  
rain water  
From mountain glides' (p.11)

This attitude brought him a 'New Experience' with a 'New life, natural, original, real.' He gets the moment of transition. The desired metamorphosis sets in.

"Many things I frog leaped with no difficulty,  
From thing to thing the gap I bore,  
Hardly awakened the sleeping senses in  
me. A transition at the end, a silent  
transition Like caterpillar in pupa to a  
butterfly I passed.'(p.11)

It is not a dream or an illusion, nor a dream nor an illusion, but a reality. The transformation is so efficacious that

'Like a crested hawk I watched the  
silent passing seconds,  
Now so unconscious, so oblivion I am I  
live Like a lovely stag in the deep forests  
Time consciousnessless. (p.12)

He lives in oblivion, unconscious of the things passing by. He becomes a part of the infinity, the boundless, all-pervasive Nature, indifferent to the passage of time.

"Who knows exact time and place of  
this tiger's birth  
this reckless wanderer in the luscious forests?  
What is the age of a circling wave in a  
bubbling stream?  
What does a ten-month old babe know of  
Times's gliding? (p.12)

He begins to observe everything around as his perception changes. All things in Nature delight him immensely. The noisy chirping birds he hears bring to him splendid joy with their mellifluous sounds; he can decipher time in tune with the position and colour of the sun-if the sun is vertical it is mid day and purple it is twilight-

"The only act in nature I am aware of is the  
rise of day and  
The fall of night" (p.12)

The oneness with nature, an essential element of transcendentalism is further enhanced when he likens himself to 'an alpine dashing in the air against hilltops from dawn to dusk,' a 'sturgeon splashing in the deep waters of the Atlantic Ocean' ;a stoic

humped camel in the Thar desert; a wild buffalo strutting aimlessly along the waters in Manas Sanctuary'. He lives as naturally as the other creatures in the universe-'I keep, I pass, I live again and again'. This comes close to the lines of Whitman in 'Song of Myself':

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean  
But I shall be good health to your  
nevertheless,  
And fitter and fibre your blood Failing  
to fetch me at first keep encouraged  
Missing me one place search another  
I stop somewhere waiting for you. (p.353)

The moment he realizes it, like the Ancient Mariner who feels lighter when he considers all things in nature, big or small, as great, he is totally relaxed. Earlier he lived with a certain identity, protected it, in the name of "family, group, religion, sect, tradition, culture and so on." These factors" stocked the tree of my "self" and get disconnected and his "self" becomes free enabling him to enjoy the independence

"I stretched my legs, limbs, hands and  
muscles, my body relax,  
I contemplate upon nothing,  
I realize being rootless is being nothing."  
(p.13)

Once he realizes himself, the "I" blossoms and aspires to "become" and so he says, "I became, I became, I became." He attains self-awareness through each phase of this transformation and "at the end of each I became something of something."

The poet-persona hears a call of a blank coucal from the foliage and it asks him where he wants to go. He answers, "I am a wanderer with no set destinations within me." To another question of the bird, he replies he wants to become nothing of nothing.

"Like you I wish I had no aims  
Like you I wish I want to become nothing  
Like you I wish I want to flit and flash." (p.14)

He senses a mocking tone of the bird. He aspires to be one with the bird without any 'restraints and constraints.' " Unlike others I am I am what I am not." This comes as a parallel to "I was myself once I was I was/To myself I became I was I was," an assertion expressed earlier. The mention of the black coucal and its teasing incomplete

"Ah.....You.....ah....You...you..." reflects probably it's not-so-sure-about- the human attitudes. Certainly there is a predominant element of transcendentalism manifest in the poem as experienced by the well-



known writers like R.W.Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and Emily Dickinson. The last mentioned poet in her poem beginning with "A Bird Came down the Walk" describes how the attempt of the observer- the poetic speaker- to feel one with the bird has been turned down by the latter with a feeling of threat and insecurity. The bird is at home in Nature but behaves aggressively towards the worm which it eats and is politely indifferent to the beetle. It eats the angle-worm raw but gives way to the beetle. When the speaker spies on it, it feels its natural habitat is being invaded. To quote the lines from the poem

"A bird came down the Walk--  
He did not know I saw--  
He bit an Angle worm in  
halves And ate the fellow,  
raw And then he drank a  
Dew From a convenient  
Grass—  
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall  
To let a Beetle pass—  
-----  
-----  
Like one in danger, cautious,  
I offered him a Crumb  
And he unrolled his feathers  
And rowed him softer home-----"

The human being attempts to be one with the bird which feels intimidated. The speaker in 'Echoes Silent' also desires to be like the black coucal and he continues the bird imagery when he describes the 'red rumped swallow' flying wildly in the 'unhindered space'. He infers that it could be the swallow's 'brutal thirst for flying'. The speaker says he too gathered knowledge just for the sake of knowledge. He reads books endlessly, tirelessly without actually realizing why he is doing it.

Emerson in his 'American Scholar' states, "Instantly the book becomes noxious: the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry if it is disparaged". Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books." (p.48-49).Echoing the underlying thought in the above mentioned passage the speaker reads,

Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, Gide, Russel and converts into another pseudo thinker. The writer uses an apt expression of kneading, here, which reinforces the effort of the speaker in evolving his own philosophy from all the philosophies that he has gone through earlier. Yet, his thirst for knowledge remains unquenched even after he meets diverse representatives from every cross-section of the intelligentsia like priests, saints, scholars, philosophers and moralists. In turn, he becomes a 'mechanized rubber doll', speaking through knowledge, viewing through knowledge; acting in knowledge for knowledge, living in knowledge for knowledge and finally it leads his life blindfolded nowhere. This is what Emerson wants those who relive merely on books again when there is a plenty to be imbibed directly from Nature first hand why books? The futile impact of books leads the speaker to wander about. He recall the tiny beautiful ashram on the river bank built of bamboos and thatches, like Thoreau's hut by the Walden Pond as there are no other human dwellings but complete sprawling greenery bustling with birds. The person he sees there is a saint who welcomes him, warmly and politely. The speaker notices radiance in his face that the saint derived his knowledge and wisdom from his ancestors is also hinted at in the verse lines

'It was the thin mat that separated him  
From the muddy earth beneath it,  
That was the space of distance I realized  
Between knowledge and wisdom.' (p.17)

Though the I-persona spends days and nights with the saint, in complete rapture, he admits with no remorse that he has failed to understand something.

The poet Prof. K.V.Raghupathi in his interview with Dr.P.Laxmi Prasad comments about his 'Echoes Silent' thus: "It is a long poem that of course has not attained the sublime what I have presented is my disenchantment with many things, especially our educational system and all that was taught to me in schools and colleges. I discarded all of them. I tried to get rid of it and I have confessed that" (p.227). This confession comes very much alive when the poet covertly lashes against the education system that supplies knowledge at various levels in a phased manner rather mechanically. The following passage reflects the personal experience of the speaker in the poem:



First ordained in knowledge at home,  
Second indoctrinated in knowledge at schools,  
colleges, universities,

Third baptized none but proselytized  
into many types,

Thus was I lost in knowledge by books  
in books for books,

Last renounced none but proselytized  
into many types,

Thus was I lost in knowledge nothing  
but knowledge,

Doubts, true or false, sprouted never on  
the surface of my

Mind, Either true or false, it was  
all information in pieces,

Like a flowing river I received everything,  
all peat, stones  
And dried leaves.

Learning became strenuous, tortuous,  
intolerable.' (p.17-18)

This is absolutely true of the present system of learning which the speaker continues to voice in the disillusionment:

What could not be endured I endured like a  
prisoner in the Camp.

The pains of learning under coercion  
At home, at schools, at colleges and  
in universities,

I bore the voice of teachers in  
utter mortification. (p.18)

He tolerates the entire process with no resistance but with an inward repulsion. He surrenders and submits to the masters like a meek dog and like a parrot in the cage repeats the alphabet after them. The entire exercise is so mechanical and regimental that he "imitated, mimicked and repeated" like a wild tiger in a circus under the control of a ringmaster. The result is he doubts nothing, questions nothing, grasps nothing, is in a constant dilemma and 'deep dense darkness' as to where to head for, he satisfies himself that he has progressed, thinks, he knows everything, learns everything, faces the examinations, tests his memory from the books recommended and gathers hollow putrefied facts but has never acquired the ability to comprehend the simple truths of Nature- "Hardly I realized the two leaves of the same twig of the same

branch of the same tree are dissimilar.' This echoes the earlier expression 'I was myself once I was I was/ To myself I became I was I was.' Thirty years ago when he was five hollow men with hollow ideas founded academic institutions in the most beautiful pervasive natural ambience, that transmit 'shallow ideas and thoughts to hollow students by shallow teachers'. The polarities portrayed here are the unnatural modes of learning in the natural surroundings and under the cool shades of green trees but beneath the gray roofs. Emersonian influence on the poet speaks for itself profoundly.

Emerson in 'The American Scholar says, 'That great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring and expiring of the breath, in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the seat; in day and night; in heat and cold; and as yet more deeply ingrained in every atom and every fluid is known to us under the name of polarity.' (p.53) There are many colour images also here, like pink, gray, white, green and deliberately repeated usage of hallow and shallow to emphasize the emptiness of the whole endeavour and is well expressed in 'Man is essentially an alloyed-misshapen-by product thrown in the swamp rotting.'

Exposed to such meaningless acquisition of the so called knowledge of 'something of something, the speaker enrolls himself as a student with an inward quest for knowledge for the essential wisdom but faces situations where scholars debated, quarreled, insulted, groped, roared over the rotten mutilated thoughts preserved in books.' He remains a mute listener in pain and dismay and likens himself to sheep and cattle in the country side, 'growing and fading, growing and fading in my own garden of darkness,' He walks with knowledge entwined:

We walked together like two good  
companions in mind,

Undivided,

Knowledge with me, I with knowledge,  
inextricably entwined,

Long years of unbroken association,  
Who introduced me and I

To this? (p.22)

He lives in division caught between the changelessness of his heart and the changing knowledge of his mind, half of his heart deep and half



cold until he realizes that the real knowledge lies outside the domain of knowledge of closed rooms and books and libraries and seeks to find it in the boundless presence of it all over nature in the universe. Whitman says in the first section of 'Song of Myself'

I, now thirty-seven years old  
in Perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death Creeds and  
schools in abeyance, Retiring back a while  
sufficed at what they Are, but never  
forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit  
to Speak at every hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy  
(p. 305)

This realization dawns on the poet, probably more or less around the same age as he sounds it earlier, that thirty years ago when he was five he has had futile learning.

From now on there is a metamorphosis in the attitude of the speaker who begins to take notice of the other living creatures in nature from whom he starts imbibing various hitherto unknown facts. At the very beginning he describes a stately tiger, majestic and strong, freely wandering without chains unlike man who is free but in chains. The speaker wonders who has taught him how to wonder about. Similarly he sees a lovely whelk crawling in the grass. He admires its movements and its being so minutes. In the morning he watches the pure, chaste rising sun. Likewise he observes the clouds, the sky, the earth, the air, everything around.

The sunflower gives him immense joy.  
He stands before it and talks to it  
Face to face we stand She  
with her head bent in shy I  
with my head high in dignity,  
.....  
Her voice I hear  
Her apocalyptic voice tinged  
with Sadness. (p.26)

He takes long walks through the changing seasons, taking note of the minute changes occurring correspondingly. He hears countless sounds in nature-

Enticing sounds, lulling sounds, heart-rending  
Sounds,

Sweet sounds, cold sounds, warm sounds-  
Of birds, leaves, stream, wind....

All wavy sounds like musical notes. (p.27)  
Many more such sounds of pathos, joy, autumn  
leaves, grunting winds! He observes the gentle  
swaying of the air, aromatic, soft, graceful over the  
valleys, the gullies, the crevices, the creeks, the  
slopes, the terraces- so freely that he affirms, 'Life  
minus Freedom is death.'

He looks at the infants, their innocent fresh, gleaming, uncorrupted faces. He is conscious of the fact that he will never get back into his life his lost innocence, the lost bliss he reminisces his childhood-

When I was a tender, delicate boy  
I was heart and mind and body gay  
And I was sprightly and lively as a calf. (p.29)

The joy-filled childhood activities are memorable in contrast to the adulthood experiences with heavy laden knowledge, with stale and cold philosophies. He becomes thick skinned and longs for death which is far and further away to make him wise and free. He sits on the banks looking back into his childhood days mixed with pain and laughter:

I thought I heard the strange echoes still  
The echoes of songs freedom, Touching its  
tender perfect bones, Those unwritten  
sounds on the waves, Clashed with flames  
of the gulmohar. (p.31)

He witnesses the calm waving twilight and the fading blue beauties of still water. He is captured in a dichotomy between the full dancing blooms of Nature and clutches:

I heaved heavily  
Breathless like a fish out of water  
It was an excruciating experience  
Much worse than a death-strangling  
experience. (p.32)

He experiences an excruciating conflict between the world of knowledge in himself and the world of beauty around. He craves to be a part of Nature, to be spring with its exuberance, exquisite spectacles, music flowers.

Flowers of first birth  
Immortalized flowers,



Flowers of lacerating beauty of pungent Smell,  
Flowers of timelessness,  
Flowers of Freedom. (p.34)

He wishes that these flowers would destroy the fortified walls of knowledge and darkness and restore peace in him. At every level of compassion he remembers the ancient mechanical structures or monuments which merely pass on information but acquire no identity as those have no meaning in

Timelessness because they are 'Time's creations'. The speaker harps on his discontent over the loss of values, compressed life, commercialized attitudes. He derives absolute joy from the creatures around.

When conscious

I became envious of birds

In the bush that sing mellifluously  
Their Sweetness is my sadness In  
me awake

Their ageless wandering voices  
In latening twilights

Kindle and rekindle the simple freedom I  
have lost its spells and stirs  
Its untranslated

How man is Freedomless! (p.37) Gradually,  
he learns to question himself a step towards self-introspection. He is lost among

'intellectual confusion'. His loneliness continues to haunt him. At the end he undergoes the last metamorphosis

Untranslated, undefined, nameless, wordless,  
Speechless

He stares at the full -moon blown night, the  
mountains (p.41)

He senses New  
Sight, New  
Energy, New  
Strength, New  
Vision

To perceive simplicity in everything. (p.41)

He finds solace in the embrace of Nature. Life is eternal and so is Nature.

I watch I watch I watch  
There is no ending as such in living  
I move with evening twilight  
I move with morning light  
I move with night's flight  
I move with life's flight (p.48)

The long poem 'Echoes Silent' is a replica of the general sense of how the modern man feels at a certain point of time in his life. In the process of growing up the experiences cited by the poet are by large universal and certainly there is meaning in the fact that Nature is the best and greatest teacher and everyone has plenty to learn from it. The poet expresses his sensitive sentiments through silent echoes. In many places, readers can find refrains, probably to reinforce the already conveyed idea. Internal rhyme is conspicuous in some lines while a good number of colour images pervade throughout. Many visual and auditory images can be felt and an underlying musical element heard.

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