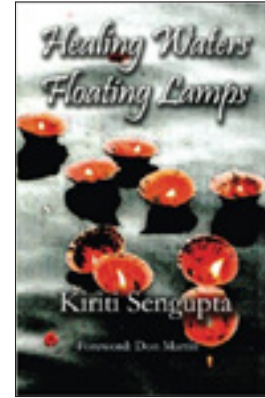


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Healing Waters Floating Lamps By Kiriti Sengupta
Moments Publication, Ahmedabad, March, 2015
Pages: 63
ISBN: 9789384180232 [Paperback]



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Healing Waters Floating Lamps in the light of Interior Monologue

A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly, shadowing the bay in deeper green. It lay beneath him, a bowl of bitter waters. Fergus' song: I sang it alone in the house, holding down the long dark chords. Her door was open: she wanted to hear my music. Silent with awe and pity I went to her bedside. She was crying in her wretched bed. For those words, Stephen: love's bitter mystery — Ulysses [James Joyce]

No one can learn to write poetry. Like pimples, problems, fragrance, and talent, poetry is natural. As natural as music, it comes from within. In literature, there is no room for any good or bad. Only it is the way of seeing that matters. Similar is the case of poetry, where readers can only polarize the poet's philosophy. Kiriti Sengupta's bestselling title *Healing Waters Floating Lamps*, which is a slim collection of verses, came to my notice lately. I found the poems modelled on the device of interior monologue, knowingly or not. Keeping in mind the aforementioned standard instance of interior monologue, I will try to establish my take on the book here.

Monologue differs from soliloquy, which is akin to speaking out loud to just oneself. In case of Novels, "Stream of Consciousness" is (a term coined by William James in *Principles of Psychology*) the psychic phenomenon itself, whether interior monologue is the verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon. Writers, like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, adopted the mechanism of interior monologue to represent the unspoken activity of the mind. This device distinguishes it both from the soliloquy and from dramatic monologue, where conventional syntax is respected. Here the poet stays fixed in space, while his consciousness moves freely in time. And most importantly, everything is present here in the poet's mind.

In the opening poem, Sengupta is quiet, speechless, and he is making a decision in expressing his strong emotions:

*I reach the sky
While I draw a circle in the water*

Looking at the image

I take a dip

[Beyond The Eyes]

He is not soliloquising, rather he creates an alter-ego of himself to speak to. A very common and routine view turns poetic through his voice, his expressions, and through his experiences.

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He has the capacity to feel something which is personal, but he also has the capacity to suppress it and express it in different ways. So powerfully the poet is in the dual sense:

*Have you seen the floating lamps in the river?
Water here is not the fire-extinguisher, but
The flames ascend through water*

Prayers reach the meditating Lord. [Evening Varanasi]

Water seems to have a soothing effect here — a panacea. Actually not water, rather time here pacifies. No tide is there, so the time waits for the lamps. To blow, to flow. To slow the flame of doubt even “reach” is about patience. The Morning wins through the constant patience of the *Evening Varanasi*. The optimistic stand of the poet is obvious, unlike Shakespeare. To the former, time heals; it harms, to the latter when he says: “*Time will come, and take my love away.*”

A poem can either be subjective, or objective. A poet is someone who does not express what he is feeling. Rather a poet is someone who hides the emotion or even channelizes his sufferings, or his subjective self into a different mode and expresses it in the mould of objectivity. As Sengupta says in the poem *In Dusty Feet*:

*To the enlightened Master
His great toes housed
Some holy grains of dust.*

The poet sticks to his promise he made to his “self” once:

*I followed his footsteps,
Even on the dusty roads
I wished to become such pious grains
So as to stay attached with his feet forever.*

The themes of hope, light, promise in one hand harks back my memory to recollect Robert Browning, a poet with stout optimism. Browning had a very happy life, even had an optimistic viewpoint about his life. We also notice this poet writing poems like *Porphyria’s Lover*, *The Last Ride Together*, expressing optimism. But they have stemmed from a condition of failure. The hope underlying in Sengupta’s poems also relates to *Waiting for Godot*, a play where two vagabonds do not give up on waiting, and say, “*We’re waiting for Godot.*”

A poet speaks out his “self.” A poet speaks out his conditions of subjectivity. A poet speaks out his mind. Also, he expresses right what he is feeling. This is interior monologue. But in dramatic monologue, his subjectivity does not hold any control over his creative mind to obstruct it into creating a form of objectivity. “*Nelson Mandela patch*” is not just a poetic usage, nor is this a catchphrase, something Sengupta is truly perturbed with, rather:

*They said you were black
They knew they were white
They loved their eyes[Color Code]*

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Sengupta speaks out his mind in *Healing Waters Floating Lamps*. We try to read thereafter. But what he tried to hint at here? About the burden of colonial baggage? Or is it merely like J. Alfred Prufrock of Eliot who does not expect his thoughts to be heard.

Interior monologue is an important technique through which Khaled Hosseini in *The Kite Runner*, enables the reader to become acquainted with the narrator Amir, and through him, the Afghan culture and history that propel much of the action of the story. But what Sengupta's mind is pre-occupied with when he writes:

*Hold on, my dear
The word "denser" does not
Necessarily mean thicker.
[Secure A River]*

The syntactical tweaks are no doubt arresting, but the beguiling nature of the inner thoughts that the lines provoke are flabbergasting. Might be Sengupta is preaching the same idea like: "All that glitters is not gold." In his conversation to none, or to the absent presence of the "self," the note of spirituality is dotted through "divine blessings." And again, through the unconscious repeated mention of "the enlightened Masters" puts stress on the depth — the existence of God. Even God's kind being is evident through Sengupta's concluding lines:

*When you have time, my child,
Come to the river...*

While putting the final touch, the flow of the language is one part of making a monologue effective. As apt and just, Kiriti Sengupta's poems in this book are very much in keeping pace with the title and theme. Even his poetic self, through the help of interior monologue conforms to it wonderfully. However, if there is no emotional stimulus the monologue ends up being flat. Emotions create the poetic self, and so makes the poem. The poet fully explores his emotional state to create something through his poems that genuinely engage his reader. Therefore, *Healing Waters Floating Lamps* by Sengupta is a valid example of wholesomeness added with cogency.

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This review will also appear in the Jan-Feb 2016 issue of Muse India