

Philosophical Musings for Meaningful Life:

An Analysis of K.V. Dominic's Poems

Edited by S. Kumaran

Modern History Press

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Contents

Preface.....	iii
About the Editor.....	vii
About the Poet.....	ix
Chapter 1 - Introduction: Poetic Mind of K. V. Dominic by P. C. K. PREM	1
Chapter 2 – Humanism in K. V. Dominic’s <i>Winged Reason</i> by Dr. S. Kumaran).....	19
Chapter 3 - An Angel in Flight: A Critique of K. V. Dominic’s <i>Winged Reason</i> by Dr. Sudhir K. Arora	27
Chapter 4 - K. V. Dominic’s <i>Multicultural Symphony</i> : A Critique by Dr. Sudhir K. Arora	33
Chapter 5 - K. V. Dominic—A Humanitarian in Conception and Socio-Consciousness: An Analytical Study of <i>Write Son, Write</i> by Dr. D. C. Chambial	43
Chapter 6 - K. V. Dominic’s <i>Winged Reason</i> : Poems of Man’s Earthly Life and Painful Realities by P. C. K. Prem.....	49
Chapter 8 - Concurrent Predicaments and Urge for Philanthropy in the Poetry of K.V. Dominic by Dr. Sugandha Agarwal	67
List of Contributors.....	241

Preface

This book is the culmination of the impact of Dr. K. V. Dominic's poetry on me and I believe my experience would become the collective experience of the readers. Each of the twenty-five chapters involves a paper. The papers have been arranged based on their themes, and they include: analysis of a collection, study of multiple volumes, scrutiny of rebellious attitude, and focus on ecocritical principles.

P. C. K. Prem's "Poetic Mind of K. V. Dominic" forms the first chapter of this book and also serves the purpose of an introduction. In his paper, Prem has examined all the three collections of Dominic and revealed the poet's zeal to use poetry as a means to enhance the quality of life on earth. He finds Dominic as a people's poet who "attempts to recognize pains, sufferings, and anguish of men who work hard, live a miserly life, but contribute to the building of vast empires, nations, and rulers" and informs the readers what they can expect from the poetry of Dominic.

In Chapter 2, "Humanism in K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason*", Dr. S. Kumaran has explored K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason* to bring out the humanistic values expressed in it. He has recognized the poems found in the collection as an ardent expression of the poetic soul to witness peace and harmony in the universe. The poems proclaim the poet's faith in the humanistic values and his belief in the inherent worth and intrinsic value of non-human others. Further, the poems reveal the poet's anguish at the evils and the inhuman attitudes prevalent in the society and necessitate harmony of existence.

Dr. Sudhir K. Arora in the third chapter "An Angel in Flight: A Critique of K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason*", has scrutinized Dominic's *Winged Reason* and found him as "a poet with feelings and nothing else" as his poetry is an outlet of his conscience that urges him to articulate "an emotion or a message often through social criticism." Dr. Arora has also studied Dominic's *Multicultural Symphony* in the fourth chapter "K. V. Dominic's *Multicultural Symphony: A Critique*" and recognized Dominic's portrayal of the plight of his countrymen and his projection of the shortcomings of the materialistic attitude.

The fifth chapter "K. V. Dominic—A Humanitarian in Conception and Socio-Consciousness: An Analytical Study of *Write Son, Write*", by Dr. D. C. Chambial elucidates Dominic's brilliant understanding of life around him and "his humanitarian philosophy steeped in contemporaneous societal consciousness, making him an advocate of the down-trodden and human values." Further, P. C. K. Prem has identified Dominic's *Winged Reason* as a rare collection of poems in Indian English poetry as it is written in simple and plain language, showing "genuine anxiety for socially neglected segments of society" and the philosophy of life in totality in the sixth chapter "K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason: Poems of Man's Earthly Life and Painful Realities*."

In Chapter 7, “Social Criticism in the Poetry of K. V. Dominic”, Prof. T. V. Reddy has identified Dominic’s profound concern for the marginalized sections of the society in almost all the lines of the three collections and revealed the poets persistent efforts ‘to dissect’ corruption at all levels—religious, political, social, and academic. Dr. Sugandha Agarwal has examined all the three collections of Dominic and found him a didactic poet who writes poetry for the benefit of the world and not to fulfill any sort of aesthetic appeal or sensuous gratification, as he writes in the eighth chapter—“Concurrent Predicaments and Urge for Philanthropy in the Poetry of K. V. Dominic.”

In Chapter nine, “Poetry for a Better World: A Critical Look at the Poetry of K. V. Dominic,” Dr. Rob Harle acknowledges Dominic’s poems as indispensable collections “to bring about positive change and equality for all individuals” and “to raise awareness in others with the hope of making the world a better place for all.” Dr. J. Pamela in Chapter 10, “A Requiem for the Disconsolate: K. V. Dominic’s Poetry as a Social Criticism”, has declared Dominic as a multifaceted personality whose poems are social criticisms and are devoid of absurdity or obscurity. She has noted that it is the poet’s sensitivity to the world that has urged him to pen down some of the mournful poems to impart his message to the reader.

In Chapter 11, “Poetry for Meaningful Life: A Critical Analysis of K. V. Dominic’s Poetry”, Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman has unveiled Dominic’s philosophical musings in the three poetry collections. He asserts that every poem of Dominic is “infused with the poet’s philosophical thought and his personal ideas, because the life of human beings is itself a philosophy.” Dr. S. Ayyappa Raja has closely observed the three collections of Dominic in Chapter 12, “K. V. Dominic as a Social Critic: A Study of His Poems”, and has brought out Dominic’s wish toward universal brotherhood and his treatment of the social issues, such as child labour, exploitation of nature, corruption, religious intolerance, poverty, casteism, the sad plight of women, superstitious beliefs, and abandonment of aged people in the society.

In Chapter 13, “Philosophical Voyage of K. V. Dominic”, Dr. Arbind Kumar Choudhary has emphasized the fact that the appeal of Dominic’s poetry lies in “his candid expression, simple language, mind-blowing thought, and innovative ideas that provoke the imagination of the muse lovers to its utmost degrees” and declares that the highly detailed observation and skilled presentation of the poet would prove to be a “milestone in the poetic world of Indian-English poetry.” Anisha Ghosh (Paul) in Chapter 14, “The Poet of the Marginalised: An Analysis of K. V. Dominic’s Poetry”, has identified the doctrines of Advaita Vedanta philosophy in the poems of Dominic and has shown the influence of humanitarians and thinkers like Swami Vivekananda, Marx, Darwin, Said, Fanon, Mother Teresa, Adi Sankara, Salim Ali, Steve Irwin, Gandhi, and Nehru, as well as from the tenets of Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhism in the collections of Dominic. Further, she has stated that the imagination of Dominic is triggered by the major English, American, and Indian poets like Wordsworth, Blake, Shelley, Keats, Frost, Emily Dickinson, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, and Jayanta Mahapatra. She has also claimed that “In all three collections of his poems, Dominic voices his proletarian sentiments in poems about the working classes, the daily wagers and the teeming millions suffering the pangs of poverty.”

In Chapter 15, “K. V. Dominic’s Poetry: Rebellion and Reticence on Winged Reason”, Joe Palathunkal has brought out the “streaks and streams of rebellion, a shriek of revolt” in

the *Winged Reason* as Dominic “has heard the call of the situational imperatives and has responded with his mind and heart, which reflect the strands of emotions and thoughts one comes across in his poetry.” Patricia Prime in Chapter 16, “A Critical Analysis of K. V. Dominic as a Philosophical Poet”, has scrutinised the poetic elements, such as style and content, vocabulary, and subject matter in the poetry of Dominic, and has found the technique and subject matter match each other and are mutually supportive. Further, she avers that his collections need a critical insight to comprehend their sublime philosophy. Ecocritical principles necessitate the interconnectedness of all lives and the poems of Dominic propose the interdependence of all beings as a means to achieve a harmonious world.

In Chapter 17 “The Relation between God, Man and Nature in K. V. Dominic’s Poems”, Dr. Mahboobeh Khaleghi has divulged Dominic’s insistence of interdependence of all lives in his collections of poems and his desire to establish peace on earth. Sangeeta Mahesh in Chapter 18, “K. V. Dominic, the Messenger of Humanity, Peace, and Harmony in the Universe”, has apprehended the theme of humanism, peace, and harmony in the poems of Dominic and publicized him as “the painter of realistic, imbalanced society, full of pain and sufferings, and the dreamer of idealistic society, where all creatures in this universe live in harmony and enjoy the bounties of nature.”

Dr. Radhamany Sarma has highlighted the issues such as human rights, nature, multi-cultural Kerala, child labor, social criticism, religious fanaticism in the poems of Dominic and has shown him as a multifarious personality in Chapter 19, “Philosophical Musings for Meaningful Life: An Analysis of K V Dominic’s Poetry”. In Chapter 20, “The Landscape of Kerala in K V Dominic’s Poetry”, Anisha Ghosh (Paul) has examined the landscape of Kerala, “the multicultural atmosphere as well as various social realities and problems that prevail in the State”, in all the three volumes of Dominic and pointed out his ability to integrate society with Nature.

Dr. S. Barathi in Chapter 21, “Eco-critical Perspectives in the Poetry of K. V. Dominic”, has investigated the relationship between human activities and the natural world in the poems of Dominic and appreciated the eco-critical consciousness in them. In Chapter 22, “Ecological Issues Reflected in the Selected Poems of K. V. Dominic”, Rincy Mol Sebastian has captured the environmental consciousness of Dominic and the address of major environmental problems that disturb the relationship between God, Man, and Nature.

Dr. Arbind Kumar Choudhary in Chapter 23, “Ecological and Social Issues in K. V. Dominic’s *Multicultural Symphony*”, has declared that Dominic’s “intense passion for the burning social and national ailments makes him a disciple of Ezekielean School of poetry in Indian English literature” and his “poetic passion for the natural beauty, animal world, rural landscape, and imaginative poetic approach keep him beside the Romanticists in Indian English poetry.” The twenty-fourth chapter contains Kavitha Gopalakrishnan’s paper “Holistic Musings: K. V. Dominic as a Poet with Purpose”, in which she has analysed all the three collections of Dominic to identify the vision and mission of Dominic who announces “man’s exploitation of biosphere, the apathy shown toward fellow beings and other living creatures” and who tries to “wake them to their heinous indifference”.

Elisabetta Mariono's interview with Dominic forms the twenty-fifth chapter of the book and it portrays Dominic as a philosopher and a social critic who can bring comfort to all the suffering souls.

Let me wind up the preface expressing my deep gratitude to Modern History Press for its willingness to publish this book. I am also indebted to all contributors who made this book a reality. With this book, I hereby wish all the readers across the world a mental feast.

Dr. S. Kumaran
Editor

About the Editor

Dr. S. Kumaran is working as an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, University College of Engineering Tindivanam, which is a constituent unit of Anna University, Chennai. He has received his doctorate from Anna University and has obtained PGCTE from English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Further, he has qualified both State Eligibility Test and UGC-National Eligibility Test.

He is actively engaged in research work and his research contributions include: 30 journal publications, 3 books, 40 paper presentations, 8 papers in various anthologies, and guidance to doctoral students. Moreover, he is the Treasurer of the Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors, and Critics (GIEWEC), Associate Editor of two refereed international biannual journals—*Writers Editors Critics* (WEC) and *International Journal on Multicultural Literature* (IJML), and Member of the Editorial Boards of various journals from India and abroad.



About the Poet

Dr. K. V. Dominic, English poet, critic, short story writer, and editor is a retired professor of the PG & Research Department of English, Newman College, Thodupuzha, Kerala, India. He was born on 13 February, 1956, at Kalady, a holy place in Kerala where Adi Sankara, the philosopher who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta, was born. He got his PhD on the topic “East-West Conflicts in the Novels of R. K. Narayan with Special Reference to *The Vendor of Sweets*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Painter of Signs*, and *The Guide*” from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala. In addition to innumerable poems, short stories, and critical articles published in national and international journals, he has authored/edited twenty-four books so far. The titles are:



- Postcolonial Readings in Indo-Anglian Literature
- Selected Short Stories in Contemporary Indo-Anglian Literature
- Pathos in the Short Stories of Rabindranath Tagore
- Reason and Fantasy: A Collection of Poems and Short Stories
- Winged Reason: A Collection of Poems
- Stephen Gill's Poetry: A Panorama World Peace
- Discourses on Contemporary Indian English Poets
- Studies in Contemporary Canadian Literature
- Critical Studies on Contemporary Indian English Women Writers
- Write Son, Write: A Collection of Poems
- Critical Perspectives on the Poetry of R. K. Singh, D. C. Chambial, and I. K. Sharma
- Discourses on Five Indian Poets in English: Keki N. Daruwalla, Shiv K. Kumar, Pronab Kumar Majumder, Syed Ameeruddin, and Aju Mukhopadhyay
- Concepts and Contexts of Diasporic Literature of India
- Changing Face of Women in Literature: The Flaming Spirit

- Studies on Six Indian Poets in English: Jayanta Mahapatra, Hazara Singh, P. C.K.Prem, Gopikrishnan Kottoor, Manas Bakshi, Chandramoni Narayanaswamy,
- Multicultural Consciousness in the Novels of R. K. Narayan
- African and Afro-American Literature: Insights and Interpretations
- Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Indian Poetry in English
- Multicultural Symphony: A Collection of Poems
- Multicultural Literature of India: A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Regional Literatures
- World English Fiction: Bridging Oneness
- Jayanti M. Dalal: Select Stories
- Sarojini Sahoo's Feminine Reflections
- Indian Literatures in English: New Directions, Newer Possibilities.

Prof. Dominic is the Secretary of Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors, and Critics (GIEWEC), a registered non-profit having more than two hundred members mainly consisting of university/college professors, research scholars, and professional English writers. Prof. Dominic has conducted several national seminars and workshops all over India. He is a SAARC writer and participant of SAARC literary festivals. He is the editor and publisher of the international refereed biannual journal *International Journal on Multicultural Literature* (IJML) and Editor-in-Chief of the Guild's international refereed biannual journal *Writers Editors Critics* (WEC). Both the journals are abstracted and indexed by Literary Reference Centre Plus, EBSCO Host, USA for Worldwide reference. He is also the publisher of the international refereed annual on fiction *New Fiction Journal* (NFJ).

Dr. Dominic has been interviewed by the reputed Italian Professor, Prof. Elisabetta Marino, and it appeared in the renowned Italian journal MOSAICO in Italy and Brazil as well as its English translation in the international refereed quarterly journal *Labyrinth* from Gwalior. He is in the Advisory and Editorial Boards of several leading journals in India. The International Poets Academy, Chennai, conferred on him its highest award—Lifetime Achievement Award—in 2009.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction: Poetic Mind of K. V. Dominic by P. C. K. PREM

Dominic considers multiculturalism or unity in diversity as the essence of existence, the real beauty of oneness. The symphony and harmony in nature are symbols of unity in diversity. Multiculturalism is visible everywhere—from microcosm to macrocosm, from individuals and families to the entire world. The human organism certainly displays diversity, but still, wide-ranging organs work for the whole in perfect harmony. If a man upholds harmony in each wing of life, a meaningful synthesis will work for a dignified cause. Like many poets, he affirms that materialism distorts, rather kills principles, values, family, and social relations. Corruption is the hallmark of contemporary life where poets, as prophets, must perform social duties, he exhorts at many places. And the advent of terrorism and religious fanaticism disturb him. He calls it an irony that a man does everything in the name of God.

K. V. Dominic has published three poetic collections: *Winged Reason* (2010), *Write Son, Write* (2011), and *Multicultural Symphony* (2014) so far, and each volume exhibits the poet's anxieties for the little aspirations of an ordinary man who works in the fields and factories and who does not live a comfortable life.

Earthly Realities

Dominic's *Winged Reason* is a collection of poems of earthly imagination. Lofty thoughts and ideas are not the areas of his poetic forays. Dominic is worried about the social life of man. If a man is happy in a society and earns his livelihood, he makes a wonderful world. *Winged Reason* conveys a definite message. His second collection of poems *Write Son, Write* carries the thought process forward, and again the poet raises issues concerning man, life, and god. He is truly realistic and down-to-earth in the sense that the words with the tonal values do not distract the readers with multi-faceted meanings. In *Multicultural Symphony*, thoughts of love, fellow feelings, social anxieties, and compassion present universal feelings of human sentiments. He attempts to recognize pains, sufferings, and anguish of men, who work hard, live a miserly life but contribute to the building of vast empires, nations, and rulers. However, no one really thinks of the wellbeing of the poor and hardworking people.

The poet believes in simple, straight, and unadorned language while displaying genuine anxiety for the socially neglected segments of society. He is more interested in conveying feelings, thoughts, miseries, and the little joys of life rather than the craft and style of poetry. He is genuinely interested in life of men and considers it a poetic forte when he says:

A poet should be responsible to his own conscience. Otherwise, he cannot be called a poet. I do agree with Jayanta Mahapatra that the craft and style of language are only frills of poetry. A poet is a creator, a representative of the Almighty Creator. His duty is to recreate the world in the minds of the readers with added beauty. He has to present before his fellow beings an ideal world. Let me make a criticism of my poems, as Seamus Heaney, the Nobel Laureate, has always been doing to his poems. As a poet, I am responsible to my own conscience and I want to convey an emotion or a message often through social criticism.... poetry should be digestible as short stories and novels are. I adopt a conversational style in poetry, which again attracts the ordinary readers. Here I am influenced much by the Victorian poet Robert Browning.

I believe what he says, and he proves it. Poetry, if serves humanity, will make a permanent impression, he feels. He concentrates on the miserable conditions of the poor and feels emotional attachment. He constructs a philosophy of life worth emulating. In the sufferings of man, he finds hidden zest and meaning for life. The relation between God, Nature, and Man is the theme in Dominic's poetry. The poet believes that Man learns many things from Nature and non-human beings. Unfortunately, human beings break the flow or rhythm of a system. Dominic's poetry appeals to reason and feelings rather than imagination. Dominic's poems 'instruct' and 'delight'—the twin purposes of poetry—and thus, social thoughts predominate his poetry.

Disease and the System

He is ruefully conscious of the rampant corruption whether political or religious. Whatever concerns a man's life, living, and society is the theme of his poetic creation with minimum use of similes, metaphors, and images. In a long preface, the poet makes a statement about poetic morality, theme, and philosophy of life in totality while underlining the miserable conditions of the poor in the world. In the background of each poem, the otherwise invisible and unobserved existence of obtrusively stark realities of life of hard working poor people, and the utter darkness they confront around, challenges a sensitive mind and makes a powerful and permanent impact, and thereafter, eloquently speaks of the power of poetry, its beauty, and strength. Intensity of experience and sincerity in depiction beautify social realism in Dominic's poetry. Out of curiosity, when I probed further, he wrote to me:

The major theme of my poetry is the eternal relationship between Man, Nature, and God. Though baptized a Christian, I am primarily an Indian. It is my duty also to propagate noble values to the rest of the world. *Advaita* seems to me more reasonable and acceptable than *Dvaita*. I find the eternal affinity between Man, Nature, and God. Man is not given liberty to kill other beings nor is he allowed to uproot plants and trees for his luxuries. The Creator has given man permission to use plants just for his survival. That is the law of Nature. Are all creations—plants,

animals, planets, stars—created solely for man? I have respect for Hinduism and Buddhism as they believe in Ahimsa.

Dominic is deeply aware of the hiatus between the rich and the poor and the degree of prejudice, injustice, and exploitation that governs the lives of the poor. He the agonies and sufferings of women, old men, and the downtrodden with aching intensity and depth. Rural life is ideal, simple, and innocent, where no evil ever enters, but urbanites appear cruel and unsympathetic, materialistic and avaricious.

One may find it difficult to agree with the poet but deep down, truth reveals hard realities of life, where the cultured and the civilized dictate principles of life. In fact, life in totality without philosophic nuances is the subject matter of Dominic's poems and through an objective and realistic evaluation in social perspective, if efforts are sincere, a man's life can be happy and meaningful, the poet asserts.

Man and the World

Dominic is fundamentally a poet of humanity and his subject is 'man' and 'society'. His compassion and sympathy are concentrated on man and this quality makes Dominic special. His humanism is transparently perceptible, the moment one goes into the emotional areas the poet's verses create. A journey into the heart of the poems is an experience of not only unique stillness but also one feels a terrific eruption of feelings, volatile stirring of suppressed emotions, and restrained but transcendent creation of an affectionate and rich world.

The poet does not take the reader to regions beyond sky or probes into the depths of heart. He is definitely not worried about the other world. Ideas of love, birth, and death do not create ripples in the poet's mind and heart. Intellectual strength, capacity, and physical limitations of Dominic try to understand the known and required essentials of life of a poor man. He wishes to explore the realistic needs of man and wants to share a few moments of joy and happiness with the neglected segment of the society.

He experiments with multifaceted experiences and incidents of life, and the itch drives the poet to the heart of the society where a man lives, flourishes, and suffers. At this moment, the poet intellectualizes life where facts and truths in little fragments surface. Life turns out an indefinite mystery. Bereft of philosophic undercurrent, the little verses of Dominic are highly subjective with an objective outlook. He may appear personal in the depiction of life of a particular section of the society, but if understood properly, he speaks for the whole humanity and invokes sentiments of love for humanity. In one of the lyrics, he asks: "My dear fellow beings/when will you learn/the need for/multicultural existence?"

In beautiful and subtle words, he talks of unity in creation:

The creator made no divisions
except man and woman
he made the division
to continue creation
In truth they are one
two sides of the flow

In the third stanza, he says:

Multiplicity and diversity
 essence of universe
 From atom to the heavens
 multiculturalism reigns
 This unity in diversity
 makes beauty of universe.

(“Multicultural Harmony”, *Multicultural Symphony* 15)

At times, he interprets a man’s life from experiences gathered after conscious and careful understanding of man and life.

Many poems indirectly deal with societal setup and man’s behavior and attitude in the collective endeavor to make society a better place to live. The wretched and desolate living conditions of the poor disturb the poet and he tries to hold the rich responsible for the sufferings of the subjugated and the poor. It appears the objective of the poet, wherein he makes genuine efforts to look at the issues in the contemporary context and tries to find relevance. It is quite appropriate to recall the words of the poet:

Poor people are strangled through taxes and their governments do nothing for their welfare. The government is always with the rich, caring for their comfort and luxury. The rich can evade taxes, exploit the weaker sections, torture and kill anyone they like; they get the protection of police; can escape legal punishments...It is the duty of the rich as well as the developed countries to alleviate the miseries of the poor. (Preface, *Winged Reason*, 13)

Unending worries of getting a loaf of bread and shelter occupy the poet’s attention and lead him to a calculated, perhaps even manipulated criticism of society. He says, “Very sorry ma / I will never waste / any food in future / Ma, we shall keep / a portion of our food / and send it to / those hungry mouths” (“Hungry Mouths”, *Multicultural Symphony* 50). A greatly personal indictment of the rich, whom he finds morally responsible for the injustice perpetrated on the poor and the helpless, might appear unjustified to many, but beneath the surface, the poet’s genuine anxieties for the well-being of the vulnerable section of society cannot be underestimated. He talks of the universal problem of hunger. ailing many countries, and the exploitation of the rich, perhaps the rulers.

Anguish of Eroding Social Values

Injustice, exploitation, and poverty are the recurring themes of many poems while he quite earnestly talks scathingly of the dirty politics and degeneration of value-system. Interestingly, Dominic says it in simple words with straight meaning, but an inherent irony underlines the essence of social thought. One, at times, wonders whether one is reading about the miserable plight of the poor or it is an appeal to humanity to look below and ameliorate the pathetic conditions of the poor class. An element of insightful sarcasm with an integral sense of ridicule shocks a discerning mind. The poet, at times, appears unrealistic and unaware of the truth of life, a bitter and unkind truth.

Social criticism in lyrics provokes a sensitive man to deliberate on the injustice and inequality prevailing in the society. A poet often sings through lyrics a long and continuous song of pain and anguish and attracts a man, who empathizes with the poor and the exploited. Such lamentations appear jarring and monotonous, for ostensibly the poet delineates a poor, exploited, and crippled society because it finds no solution to the problems of livelihood and the need for a comfortable and happy life. Materialistic aspirations mostly remain unfulfilled. The strong in the society flourish and appear to relish rampant corruption and greed.

One is constrained to observe that none speaks for the rich, who, one ought to agree, at one point of time in the not very distant past, must have worked hard to earn and amass wealth so that posterity lives a happy life. Instances are many if one throws a glance outside.

Another inherent flaw in such poetry is a lopsided understanding of issues of hunger and poverty, exploitation and political corruption, which lead many poets to view life differently without invoking critical thinking faculty. At times, the poets genuinely try to find solutions to the depressing situations, but many a time, evaluation and scrutiny of social and economic spectrum is incomplete and consequently results in unwarranted criticism of the rich and the powerful. The poets appear maudlin in approach to grueling conditions in which people spend lives and die slowly. Even a hardcore socialist would not agree that there is some ideal situation where poverty is non-existent.

Emerging Gulf – The Rich and the Poor

An awful gulf between the rich and the poor is eternal and despite efforts of the saintly rulers and sages, or rulers with average intelligence, the gap remains. Poets are inveterate optimists and, many a time, aspire for something unattainable and wish others to do so. Therefore, the rich, the powerful, the elite, and the sophisticated are the target of criticism and ridicule. It is the predicament of the poet that regardless of true sensitivity and a genuine desire to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the neglected segments of the society, he is incapable of translating sublime thoughts to a reality of life.

Like any true human being, he is legitimately distressed and impatient. The squalor and extreme deprivation appear to hurt not only the poor man's soul, but it is also physically torturing. He thinks of the poor and goes through a nightmarish experience of unrelenting anguish. In straight words, like 'an obese boy' and 'a bony child', he vividly describes a sense of prevailing hunger on one side, and immediately, he talks of nauseating richness. In "A Nightmare", when he tells us poetically of 'a wedding feast, ragged girls, garbage bin, public school, legacy of the west, liquor and leper', an inherent agony upsets deeply. In sleep even, the poet feels the heat, and the picture he conjures up is a commentary on the poor man's life. Horrible dreams at night create distress in the tranquil mind of the poet who gets up as:

The siren sounded at five
And I woke up from the nightmare

(“A Nightmare”, *Winged Reason*, 23)

Thoughts of miseries continuing for generations upset and fill heart with disgust. If one looks at the realistic scene he paints about the poor and the downtrodden, one notices that life for generations has been a continuous journey of hardships:

Not far away were the slums of the city;
 Three generations lived in each hut;
 Grandpa, grandma, their sons and their wives,
 And their little kids sleep in a room!

(“A Nightmare”, *Winged Reason*, 23)

The truth that “I had a nightmare the overnight; / I was a hawk hovering in the sky” stuns and reveals a shattering situation inside. The poet’s anxiety about the contemporary issues confronting the country is quite genuine, but it is heartening that the teacher’s mind of the poet also shows the way to serious problems facing the nation and he alerts a man to the handicaps. In another verse, “Harvest Feast”, the poet hints at the effective education system the nation ought to adopt. He is enthusiastic and believes that if the future generation gets appropriate education, it can definitely prove effectual, and one can manage and take care of the perennial shortage of essential commodities, and then indirectly, he tells of the utility of vocational activities and agriculture-related work.

Instinctive Possessiveness

Practicable efforts to curb the tendency of the hoarders to create continuous shortages in food grains will prove effective if rulers take strong measures. If dignity of labor finds favor and definite plans emerge, the measures would encourage constructive thinking and humanity can hope to live happily:

how education can be vocational;
 and the beauty and dignity of labour;
 a lesson too to the adult world:
 the way to solve the food crisis,
 and save the world from poverty.

(“Harvest Feast”, *Winged Reason*, 35)

The poet tries to draw parallels and comparisons but rarely hesitates. The words like ‘obese’, ‘bony’ and ‘wedding feast’ need deep understanding. A commentary on the present day’s deplorable scarcity of food grains shocks and entails fall in the quality of life and morals. A reflection on the government’s apathy in managing surplus in food grains tells a different story of bureaucratic and political ineptitude and the lethal role of deep-rooted self-interest. One often hears assertions that no scarcity of food items exists but the masses remain hungry, for sufficient food stuff does not reach the right people. A dreadful parallelism between the rich and the poor exists, and ironically, it takes place in a country where moral values are often much flaunted, the poet bemoans. He is critical of present politics and politicians. One wonders if a man will ever realize the objective of real socialism. In “A Nightmare”, a sensitive poet is extremely sarcastic where emotions and pathos disturb.

A hint at queues speaks more than what the words say. He has a dig at the permit-oriented and rationed living, a fashion in a democratic set up.

Sufferings – A Measuring Principle

Sufferings determine the fate of the poor and the deprived. The poor keep working hard but get nothing. He observes a man’s life from different perspectives. Each incident occurring in the life of the poet carries an inherent generalization where an insightful and compassionate heart connects it with the humanity. Alas, all socialists do. Nothing escapes keenly observant eyes as he looks at men and society from various viewpoints, but an ironic indictment is an inseparable part of deeply felt anxiety. The poet philosophically laments that the creator never thought of any division among men. Whatever divisions exist, man created for serving self-interests. Nature feeds everyone but a man eats up even nature, creates a vacuum and a disruption in the perennial flow of life.

If a man acts well, he is also destructive. Despite lofty achievements, millions die of hunger. A strange phenomenon in a civilized world raises questions of social obligation and moral responsibility. The poet regrets that division speaks of inherent injustice, and at this stage, he airs socialistic thoughts with ironic parallels. maybe, the poet keeps in mind the great split a man attempts to bring about in the society and divides it not only into classes but castes, religious sects, “man-made categories; / never in creator’s dream.” (*Winged Reason*, 36). Consequently, regional and fissiparous tendencies dominate the society and man, a penchant for predictable dissolution and conflict.

What right has the mortal man
to divide and own this immortal planet?
What justice is there for the minority
to starve the majority?

.....
Capitalism rules the day;
Have-nots number swell.
Shattered and smashed
are their dreams
of health and happiness.

(“Haves and Have-nots”, *Winged Reason*, 37)

In *Multicultural Symphony* (37), he again speaks of ‘Caste Lunatics’ and he observes:

“The Dalits have no right to ride motorbikes
in presence of high caste men”
My country, the greatest democracy,
When will it be freed from
Lunatics of caste and religion?

He touches a moot point that defies solution despite solemn proclamations in the statements of leaders, powerful men, and the Constitution. Any discerning mind would be sharp, curt, and sad at the movement of time in the destiny of poor people.

Workers, Farmers, and Builders – A Mere Infrastructure

The poet is a hardened promoter of workers, and “Lal Salaam to Laborers” is a tribute to workers. Workers build a society and it lives happily. He reinforces a belief in the basic honesty of man. He feels animated and praises workers. An emotional outburst keeping with the ideology and the poet espouses the cause sincerely and elicits sympathies of apathetic people. He advocates a communistic philosophy with the precise dictum that only workers are the backbone of society and humanity. The poor is noble, virtuous, and works for the well-being of the society, the poet believes, but appears not very reasonable:

They build houses
Where they never rest,
And there we live and snore.
They sweat in factories;
Produce numberless goods;
And we use and enjoy.

(*Winged Reason*, 44)

Perhaps, it would be better to look into the past of the rich, so that one gets at the truth. Realities must guide man to attain objective through genuine efforts, honesty and sincerity. The world has rich men, who began with a penny and built great empires, if we just ignore a few unscrupulous politicians and men in power. It is a sad commentary that very few among the powerful live an honest life.

“Write My Son, Write” is a very long poem and one finds consolidation of poet’s thoughts, feelings, and ideas in the lyric, which teases, provokes, and encourages an activist. The poet acts as a messenger of God, fortifies a mission, and then spreads the message of eternal values. He takes up the task of enlightening human souls, and leads men to enjoy the wonders of nature, or perhaps, he offers a prayer and therefore, asks everyone to participate. He observes: My son, / I have a mission / in your creation, / God spoke / to my ears. / . . . / Write, my son, / write. / Write till / I say stop. (*Write Son, Write*, 21)

It is a statement of the poet’s belief and faith in the eternal principle that efforts bring success. The poet talks with a little anguish when he says, “Intellectual mafia / assumes omniscient; / exploits innocent people; / detracts them / from their Creator; / makes them pessimists; / imposes their / obsolete philosophies. / No different at all / between religious / and intellectual mafias; / twin sides / of the same coin.” (*Write Son, Write*, 37) and reveals a naked truth a man promotes, and thus, contaminates life. God reminds human beings how they prefer to act against the will of the Creator, then, ill-treat and exploit nature and non-human beings. He emphasizes the concept of multiculturalism and speaks of conservation, eco-friendly relations, and clean environment. He underscores the danger of tumbling the balance of nature.

The thoughts are new but the anguish is ancient, and man refuses to learn. It is an intellectual dishonesty, a failure of a leader espousing the cause of humanity but occupied in the promotion of self-interest.

Humanitarian considerations often impede a correct appreciation and evaluation of society and its behavior. A society thrives on challenges, competitions, subjugating the weak, and unending conflicts. A struggle continues and only the fittest survive. A socialistic mind probably ignores the fundamental latent truth a society loves to live with, and therefore, a confrontation lives on as a truth, and if a man comprehends correctly, the creativity will have a different shape.

When asked, Dominic writes rather painfully, "... a thorn that thrusts my heart is the corruption done by the politicians and government officials. Why? Because they have money. In fact, my country as well as the world as such is ruled by a few multimillionaires who constitute not even one percent of the world population. It is a shocking truth that a thousand million people live in this world without a square meal a day when raw and cooked food in thousands of tons is wasted every day. How can we justify this luxury? One can become rich only at the exploitation of the poor. It is the duty of the rich as well as the developed countries to alleviate the miseries of the poor" in a personal communication perhaps; yes perhaps, the poet wants all to listen to him. Well, Vedic Truth it is but it also speaks about the truth of other religions that speak for the poor and the exploited.

Who is responsible for making good and healthy citizens? Who makes a man meaningful? Is education worthwhile? Are teachers sincere? Do academicians work honestly or believe in fat salaries? Do teachers pursue ethical values? Questions are many. In the above questions, one has to find answers.

Freedom and Exploitation of Man

A man boasts of ability and skill of living an independent life and believes that he lives because he is strong, wise, and intelligent. However, it does not happen. A man follows the past, imitates its total psyche, and drafts a personal agenda. It has been happening since ages but alas, a man is a wonderful cheat, one must reason out and understand. The poet appears to pay sincere tributes to men, who contributed to ameliorate the poor (social, economic, and political) health of the people or who appear to have served the nation befittingly. To recognize the greatness or nobility is a charitable virtue very few harbor. An elegy on the death of E. K. Nayanar is singing of paeans in praise of a socialist pattern of society where workers get dues without any exploitation. The poet observes, "No rain could stop them; / no sleep could retreat them; / Thus mourning with the Nature, / your people swarmed round your body, / bidding "Lal Salaam, Lal Salaam." ("Long Live E. K. Nayanar", *Winged Reason*, 19). Yet, the enigma of a great divide remains engraved.

A socialist pattern will remain a dream or turn into a reality is yet not clear when he makes another pathetic and repulsive comparison between the city dwellers and the villagers. The poet finds rural people an epitome of virtues and compassion where urbanites are egotistic and impassive and warmth in human relations means nothing. He says, "Man is a wonderful work; / Unimaginable his achievements; / . . . / Achievements prove beneficial / only to Haves a minority." ("Haves and Have-nots", *Winged Reason*, 36)

If one looks at different verses, one finds a derisive ironic vein running through each word, making it more authentic. The poet's intention is not to advocate the cause of the

poor, but he is emphatic that wealth does not make society a better place to live as exploitation of the weak continues and it persistently widens the disparity between the rich and the poor. Here, another brilliantly emotional poem attracts attention. In “Tsunami Camps”, the poet is callous in telling the unresponsiveness of the government machinery engaged in lessening the anguish and miseries of people facing lethal assaults of nature’s fury that spread destruction, death and unparallel devastation. When the state machinery brought suffering people to the newly established camps, the life became more miserable, for in testing moments, self-interest ruled supreme and the so-called well-wishers failed to deliver social duties. Even the suspected people with leftist philosophy failed to deliver duties properly and contributed to the collapse of socialistic thought.

In hours of crisis, a man is not sincere. He is selfish and callous. People suffer in camps but exploitation continues. To render help in a crisis becomes a device to strengthen political roots. Terror and dread walk into the refugee camps.

How dreadful the life in a Tsunami camps!
 People burnt in man-made hells;
 God’s crazy seeing their sufferings.
 Money is hoarded in the government exchequer
 Or diverted for some other purposes.

(“Tsunami Camps”, *Winged Reason*, 33)

Corruption, dishonesty, and cruelty determine the mindset of people engaged in relief operations.

If one deeply examines the implied meaning of Onam, a great festival of Kerala, one enjoys and cherishes joviality, gay abundance, and a feeling of exuberance one witnesses among the people on Onam festival. The festival is a sign of paying genuine tributes to the hardworking people, who work and water fields, plough and sow seeds in the fields, toil hard, and reap rich harvest so that fellow brethren do not go hungry. A system is born where equality is pervasive, and values of life enrich each mind and heart. A sense of sacrifice and public weal governs the psyche of people. The poet stands aloof and appears to evince belief in an indistinguishable force that provides hope:

Onam has a legend:
 a remembrance of
 the golden rule of Maveli
 an icon of the just king.
 Equality prevailed in society
 no lies, no crimes, no deceits,
 and no cheat

(“Onam”, *Winged Reason*, 54)

At another level, “Old Age” (*Winged Reason*, 51) heightens an inbuilt irony and pessimism amidst hopes of a vibrant life and the “The monarch of yesterday, / feels humbled today. / Imprisoned amidst unripe ripeness; / utterly helpless.” And a sadistic pleasure continues to overwhelm.

Wistfulness – Peace and Harmony

If one enquires into the reality of life, an ultimate perception of equality, where happiness and joy triumph, frequently fascinates the poets. An irony of circumstances overruns and nothing concrete happens despite pious sentiments. Shortage of money, ethics, hope, and joy is a persistent theme of Dominic's lyrics and even if he does not refer, a disturbing and perturbing thinking pervades lyrics and keeps teasing. Lyrics constitute an entreaty and make appeals to the wealthy to get up and make a solemn pledge to help vulnerable segments so that they get freedom from a ghostly dominance of exploitation, poverty, and sufferings.

In a similar strain, the poet narrates an incident where the "sacred ornaments of Krishna are stolen" and elsewhere "golden rosary" disappears. Ironically, one cannot catch hold of the culprits. Does he hint at the land of thieves or corrupt people? Furious faces of gold-crazy gods and the golden robes of the priests, offer a pathetic but irritatingly sardonic and laughable picture. Pleasures and pains dominate and it appears a huge void with little joys.

At another level, the scenario is vast where a man indulges in intellectual exercise, and forgetting anguish of life, hopes to live in peace and harmony. The poet goes beyond national borders:

Dear my fellow beings
Break away all fences and walls
Fences of your petty minds
Compound walls of your houses
Walls of your religions and castes.

"Multicultural Harmony", *Multicultural Symphony*, 22)

If it happens, quite genuine desires of a peace-loving person will bring meaning in life. A true man wants no cultural, linguistic, historic, regional, religious, national, or individualistic ambitions to survive, for universal love will flourish when humanity lives as a family. A teacher stands up and takes us to a primary school.

If hard work becomes the ruling passion of everyone, it brings health, wealth, and prosperity. If one notices rich people around, one ought to go back to past and find out the truth. The rich of today must have worked hard as the poor of yesterday. It is also possible that the rich of today, if do not work hard, may become the poor of tomorrow. Therefore, the rich and poor continue to move in a vicious cycle. The poets, who write so passionately and painfully about the poor, ought to evaluate past, present, and future to arrive at a correct picture. Undoubtedly, the pre-dominance of miseries in life often give trouble but somewhere, the poet keeps the flame of hope alive and conceivably, he says obliquely that a spring of inspiration flows out to invigorate drooping spirits when experiences anguish.

Man, Nature, and God – A Thematic Concern

The poet avers that his areas of concern are 'Man, Nature, and God', and truthfully, it encompasses life in entirety with no derivations. Around the three dimensions, the total life of a man moves and it defines limits of various conscious and unintended acts. He concentrates on 'Man' with intensity and each word, even if he uses the theme inadvertently, focuses

on the anxieties and predicaments of human life. In “Old Age”, the poet is vivid, realistic, and harsh when he talks that “Human life is a cycle.” The verse is a true portrayal of a journey from pains to pleasures, and then from pleasures to pains it continues. The sequence is uninterrupted and the meaning of life is obvious.

At another level, the poet’s anxieties appear perceptible when he observes that only strenuous work makes a man’s life meaningful and that the workers are the true custodians of a life of meaning and truth. Such patterns of thoughts continue to flow in the verses of Dominic. The poet appears a little idealist and, ignoring truths, remains occupied with the thoughts of the poor. He often forgets to assess the dynamics of life and its various dimensions, whether philosophic or otherwise. He tries to define the life of a worker from various aspects. In “Why is Fate So Cruel to the Poor” (72), he raises similar issues when he takes us to the plight of workers in Jharkhand.

Landlessness and graft in public schemes
 Compel the villagers every year
 To compel the villagers every year
 To migrate to neighbouring Bihar

 Twenty five labourers and ten children
 Died suffocated under heavy sacks
 They struggled hard for the grain
 And the grain led them to their graves
 Why is fate so cruel to the poor?

Workers in different areas of life disturb the poet and the pains travel to *Multicultural Symphony*, a latest offering of lyrics.

A socialistic thought process primarily determines the humanism of the poet in Dominic. A humanitarian thought awakens the poet and he gives a clarion call to the man to turn all ornaments into food and ‘Gods will be Pleased’ and it will bring contentment and affluence. Possibly, thoughts of widespread hunger and scarcity pester the poet. Food and food only appears to be the panacea for all ailments in the world:

Take all ornaments
 from temples and churches
 turn them into food
 and serve
 to hungry mouths
 AND GODS
 WILL BE PLEASED.

(“Gods will be Pleased”)

Genuine hard work makes a man’s life meaningful and only the workers are the true custodians of a life of meaning and truth. Such patterns of thoughts continue to flow in the verses of Dominic. The spirit of work is a prayer in itself, and the poet is adequately vivid when he speaks through the words of a parish:

("You are right, my son,"
 whispered God to my ears,
 "I've never asked my children
 to waste a day flattering me.)

And again he says:

 My dear son, live in Karma,
 love all creations,
 for I am in everything.")

 ("Work is Worship", *Write Son, Write*, 95–96)

The teachings of the men of wisdom and great men, who often exhort a man to work hard, apparently attract the poet. However, one notices that in such situations, sensitive people often forget to evaluate critically the contemporary situation in historical perspective and therefore, often indulge in wishful deliberation.

Unhealthy and Deformed System and Karma

All religions tell men to work honestly and ardently with faith and dedication, for hard work gets adequate reward. The poet puts emphasis on the theory of *Karma* of *Gita* in the true sense of the word, and possibly irrevocable and deep belief, encourages him to hold the workers in high esteem. At times, he appears to digress and touches other themes, but the idea of a man's contentment continues to occupy idea of life. Elected representatives govern the people in a democratic system and one thinks it is the gist of themes of governance. When the poet speaks of common persons, workers, and the masses, he does not forget to talk of the rich and the powerful.

However, in different perspectives, he spells out that the rich are the products of an unhealthy and deformed economic system where the concept of equality in social, economic, and political life is utopian. As a theory, it is good to talk about and it seems enriching as a sublime thought; but when translated into reality, it is a burden because a man cannot accept equality when he is poor and the elites and the advocates of egalitarianism must understand the truth, an unpleasant fact. Socialism and a democratic form of government are developing a system where perfection is still a mirage. Even communism has failed and democracy is not a noble and virtuous structure entirely to govern society. The poet talks of Communism and Socialism or a socialistic pattern of society, and now, in "Indian Democracy", he takes a pessimistic view of life in such an organization.

 Secularism butchered;
 caste and religion
 raise their hood;
 Regionalism and parochialism
 devour
 nationalism and patriotism.

.....

Gullible people
 they vote them again and again;
 no other options.
 Still democracy shall prevail
 or tyranny will
 sit on the Chair.

(“Indian Democracy”, *Winged Reason*, 60–61)

...and in the recurring state of disturbed mental frame elsewhere, he affirms the origin of sufferings and prays to God for relief.

“God, save us
 From this extreme heat;
 Save us from the drought;
 Merciful and Almighty God;
 grant us rain
 save our land.”

(“God is Helpless”, *Write Son, Write*, 63)

He talks of the filth man has spread through toxic gases and thus contaminated the environment. One finds man’s ruthlessness creates havoc where man tortures plants, animals, water, and air; and thus, the created beings suffer from lack of food, water, shelter, and air. The poet, a communist, is sad and stands defeated as he requests an invisible force to help man and the world. The change in poet’s thoughts baffles.

One finds a subtle journey in the thought process of a sensitive poet. Sufferings and lethal way of life in crushing situations distress the poet, and suddenly, he probes into ‘identity’ and ‘self’ when questions like “Who am I?” come up; and again, he goes to workers and farmers and expresses sympathy where he finds lack of appreciation shown toward life:

An illiterate farmer is greater than you;
 His service is greater than your scribbling;
 Labourers’ sweat is dearer than your ink;
 If they strike, your writings will cease,
 and ultimately you yourself will disappear.
 Hence support them and write on them;
 Proclaim to the world the noble
 service they render to the humanity.

(“Who am I?”, *Multicultural Symphony*, 64)

Thoughts of inherent defeat force the poet to surrender to hands that work and feed humanity. Highly sentimental attitudes in difficult times when emotions are futile overwhelm a tender heart.

A Hesitant Message

It is quite apparent that the observed attitude of selfishness torments the poet. How to fight against such evils ailing the society is the worry of many poets. Still, hopes survive. Religious, political, and intellectual mafias continue to reign over the world-structure and promote vices of self-perpetuation and greed. If media and means of communication (print and electronic media) play significant roles in purging and shaping the minds of people in a more effective and selfless way, the world would be a better place. He reveals the inner wish of each noble and realistically ideal man.

Instead of alleviating the sufferings of the masses, efforts of man have failed miserably. It happened because man has destroyed the bases of a democratic system. The virus of voting pattern in reality divides not just man, but society and the nation as well. India is a vast country with a wonderful parliamentary system but it is also 'a stage of heinous means'. Unfortunately, the politicians in the country exploit sentiments of people, raise non-existing issues of communalism, and thus divide the people. Once unknown, communalism is now eating into the vitals of people's energies and faith. Religions are no more a sustaining force but split and segregate men, based on caste, creed, class, and region/geography. In such circumstances, what should one expect from workers, who suffer, cry, and fight for rights?

Now, if one examines the issue, one observes a painful truth that even the workers live divided in feelings, thoughts, and warmth. For many people, their loyalties remain within their own class and so discrimination and exploitation continue. While the 'gullible people' suffer, violence and terrorism thrive. The very existence of man is meaningless. The life of a man can be happy and full of optimism in any system. Happiness and prosperity of people is the objective of good governance and if it does not happen, the system needs burial. The poet is disillusioned because the people do not get relief from the system. The present system and the governance crush and kill the spirit of man despite vociferous claims to the contrary.

What right has the mortal man
to divide and own this immortal planet?
What justice is there for the minority
to starve the majority to death?
How pitiable
that religions give no solace and hope
to the miserable multitudes.

The Have-nots found a haven
in socialism and communism;
no private property;
state-owned wealth;
selfless work for the society.
But power corrupted;
leaders turned tyrants;
the philosophy failed.
Equality to man utopian.

Capitalism rules the day.

(“Haves and Have-nots”, *Winged Reason*, 37)

With a slight tilt in thoughts, he looks at his shoes and symbolically finds relations with the attitude of a rich man toward workers, farmers, and laborers when he observes:

Same is the plight of proletariat
 They are shoes worn by the rich
 Service being complete
 They are spat out like curry leaves
 Women too are often treated like shoes
 Mothers and wives when old and weak
 Become burden to sons and husbands

(“Musings on My Shoes”, *Multicultural Symphony*, 58)

The poet appears quite callous and ungenerous but truth forces him to write so curtly.

While going through the poetry of Dominic, it is obvious, he conveys a certain message and is sure of it, and the quality constitutes a singular exquisiteness and power of social lyrics. When he thinks of Man, Nature, and God, he is more concerned about the synthesis among the three, and the harmonious concord is the cause of tranquility and synchronization on earth. He tries to establish a deep relationship between the objects of nature and experiences that nature is essentially magnanimous and liberal. Man brings disharmony in life. He hints at the frightening cracks in relations and integrity among men. Ferocious and wicked inconsistencies among the rich, the powerful, and the poor and the weak look understandable whereas nature does not differentiate. For all the acts, a man tries to involve God and justifies the existing break between man and man.

A thoughtful man—the social animal—erects walls of separation and conflicts, as animals and plant life appear as symbols of peace and prosperity. Dominic is definite and optimistic at times, when he indirectly exhorts men to show compassion and sympathy. His philosophy is a search unending where he must rest only when true happiness visits everyone. The poet is not only inclined to a socialistic thought, but also deep down the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and John Ruskin vastly determines his thoughts. Undoubtedly, the poet is distinctively modern, and is worried about the system and its mechanism.

Dominic has an obsession for the workers and so he writes about the workers and farmers, and irritates frequently. However, one needs to offer an authentic ear, true sympathy, and appreciation, for he speaks of a historical truth. A person committed to an ideology can feel and say with precision and conviction. Dominic is an advocate of a socialistic pattern, and the value system he espouses implicitly borders on principles that care for the poor and the exploited.

The poetic art of Dominic shifts focus from one issue to another. He tries to emphasize an economic view of life in society, and at times, falls in abstractions temporarily. He creates a structure of words where he provokes intellectual deliberation, and at this point, a perception of decentering disturbs, for unity suffers. He intellectualizes on social and economic issues and creates a post-structural approach to the understanding of man, life, and society.

Dominic's social perception is quite evident in many verses. A continuing movement within and without is a fact and it affects the life of man. A humanitarian and philosophic approach to man gives him strength. He looks at man closely. He does not make efforts to find themes for lyrics. Even a little news, an insignificant incident, an important or petty person, a simple lie or a truth inspires him to write. Workers, farmers, laborers, and the exploited encourage him to write and write. He aspires to live in an idealistic society but fails to find a fulcrum. He constructs a lyrical structure, dismantles it, and again reconstructs it with a subtle transformation in feelings and thoughts, but continues to prolong a humanistic perception.

Chapter 2 – Humanism in K. V. Dominic’s *Winged Reason* by Dr. S. Kumaran)

The seventh edition of the *New Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines humanism as “a system of thought that considers that solving human problems with the help of reason is more important than religious beliefs. It emphasizes the fact that the basic nature of human is good” (Hornby 2005). Corliss Lamont, the author of *Humanism as a Philosophy*, states that “Humanism, in brief is a philosophy (religion) the guiding principle of which is concentration on the welfare, progress, and happiness of all humanity in this one and only life” (Lamont 1997). This paper explores K. V. Dominic’s *Winged Reason*, a collection of poems, to bring out the humanistic values expressed in it. The poems found in the collection are an ardent expression of the poetic soul to witness peace and harmony in the Universe. They proclaim the poet’s faith in the humanistic values and his belief in the inherent worth and intrinsic value of non-human others. Further, the poems reveal the poet’s anguish at the evils and the inhuman attitude prevalent in the society and necessitate harmony of existence.

In this modern and busy world, people have lost their respect for human values and lead insular lives. Empathy is often neglected for convenience and for selfish gains. The poet proves to be different from the rest by his sympathy and concern for others. “In Memoriam George Joson,” the first poem in the collection, the poet declares his sorrow on the death of his colleague in a car accident and expresses his concern for the welfare of the family. According to Lamont (1997), “Humanism simply means ‘human being-ism’, that is, devotion to the interests of human beings, wherever they live and whatever their status” and the poet’s ability in bringing out the pathos is beyond comparison; and it reveals his genuine grief:

When your youngest kid,
not knowing what has happened,
kissed your face
again and again
and plucked flowers
from your wreath;
tossed them to her sisters weeping and screaming
What a game He plays!

(“In Memoriam George Joson”, *Winged Reason*, 17)

Most of the humans in this world are confused about the activities of the world and its functioning. As a fellow being, the poet shows the path of divine knowledge and illuminates the minds of humans with the knowledge of the universe. The poet accepts and informs

humans about the role of fate in the lives of humans but establishes faith in the divine play of the Supreme Being and urges humans to surrender unto the will of the ever-lasting soul. He avers that:

As the great poet sang:
 We are all puppets in His hands,
 dancing to the tunes He plays.
 The best is to resign
 to what He ordains
 in time and out of time

(*Winged Reason*, 18)

As the success of a nation depends on politics, humans cannot isolate themselves from it. A good deal of knowledge and interest in politics is necessary for every human so as to ascertain their contribution to the glory of the nation. The poet's interest in the politics of his times is commendable. Unlike Abbey who wanted to find an alternate place, i.e., Abbey's Country to place himself away from the reach of people, the poet discloses his interest in politics and also points out the good qualities of a politician through "Long Live E. K. Nayanar." He commends E. K. Nayanar:

You were a true Communist;
 a comrade to the core of your being,
 a rare species,
 compassion and love
 an epitome of Socialism

("Long Live E. K. Nayanar", *Winged Reason*, 19)

The poet upholds Indian democracy and reveals its lapses through "Indian Democracy". He feels that Indian democracy is the largest on the planet and is considered a wonder by the world. At the same time, he does not fail to point out how it is made ugly by the selfish politicians who fail to fulfill their duties. He remarks:

National parties play
 trump cards with communalism;
 bow their heads before priests.
 The real issues of the country
 never discussed among people.
 Election campaigns:
 fireworks of lies and abuses

("Indian Democracy", *Winged Reason*, 80)

The poet extols peace and condemns violence in all forms. He does not approve the brutal attacks made on the people by authorities for power, selfish gains, and false beliefs, and questions the rationality of their inhuman actions. He addresses the sad plight of the people and reveals his interest in human values. In "A Blissful Voyage", he avers that:

I wish I had the claws of a vulture

to fetch the skeletons from Iraq
and build a bone-palace
to imprison Bush in it!

(“A Blissful Voyage”, *Winged Reason*, 21)

In fact, the poet is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of the country and desires to explore a distant legion. As he believes in the transforming power of humanism, he is determined to inspire humans to be aware of it and to adopt it. In this regard, Kurtz (1973) feels that “Humanists have a moral commitment to free thought, to the fulfillment of human potentialities and the democratic ideal of humanity as a whole.” Dominic also brings out the unfulfilled attempts made by the great personalities to establish humanism and points out their ever-remaining dream:

If I could fly like an angel,
would plead all prophets
to inspire and instill humanism
in millions’ communal minds.
I would meet Gandhi too
who is weeping at his shattered dreams.

(“A Blissful Voyage”, *Winged Reason*, 21)

Humans long to have a sense of belongingness to a place and are ready to die for their homeland. On the other hand, its absence questions the meaning of their lives and puts them at the mercy of others. Further, the lack of mercy leads to mental trauma and inexplicable woes. In “Tsunami Camps”, the poet brings out the unhealthy atmosphere of Tsunami camps. He feels that even gods will become crazy seeing the sufferings of the refugees. Though many days are over since their arrival on the camps, their status has not been improved a bit. Further, the poet mourns that they are not given basic amenities for their living and vehemently remarks:

“Where have gone the crores
collected for our relief?”
Money is hoarded in the government exchequer,
or diverted for some other purposes.
“It’s better to kill us than torture like this.”
“We don’t have sufficient food,
we don’t have pure water”

(“Tsunami Camps”, *Winged Reason*, 33)

The division among the people is the result of their contaminated minds and it makes the world an unsuitable place for living. The poet shows how humans have brought division among themselves ignoring the purpose of God’s creation in “Haves and Have-nots.” He reveals that God had no idea of Have and Have-nots when he created humans and they are purely ‘man-made categories.’ He finds Nature is bountiful enough to feed with its resources but ‘selfish man disrupts Mother Nature’s feeding. Further, he questions:

What right has the mortal man
to divide and own this immortal planet?
What justice is there for the minority
to starve the majority?

(“Haves and Have-nots”, *Winged Reason*, 37)

Humanism has become an integral part of the poet. Even in his dream, he thinks of humanity. He brings out the existence of quite contrary things in the society and questions the rationality behind incongruous actions in “A Nightmare”. He finds a mother forcing her obese child to eat more and juxtaposes it with the description of a bony child who was crying for a crumb. Further, he notices people relishing feast and also observes ‘two ragged girls outside struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin’. The poet points out the desertion of aged people by their children and the sufferings of the parents in “Gayathri’s Solitude”. He tells that the children leave for foreign countries, ignoring their parents at the hometown. They think that the money they send could make their parents happy. The irony is that:

Poor, miserable mother,
she has no hunger,
she has no sleep.
An old lily flower
pale and faded.
Dawn to dusk,
sitting in an armchair,
looking at the far West,
longing for her children’s calls,
she remains lonely.

(“Gayathri’s Solitude”, *Winged Reason*, 31)

The poet brings out how human values are violated under the pretext of religion. In “In the Name of God”, the poet exposes how the name of God is used to cover illegal actions and to practice evils. He also thinks that ‘criminal actions’ taken in the name of God outnumber the good things done in His name. He observes:

Terrorists butcher thousands
in the name of God.
Teens become terrorists
in the name of God.
Sexism prevails
in the name of God.
Higher castes exploit
in the name of God.
Secularism is nullified
in the name of God.

(“In the Name of God”, *Winged Reason*, 69)

The poet believes in the beauty of village life and encourages humans to learn humanism from it. The poet compares city life with village life in “City Versus Village” and elucidates the greatness of village life. According to Pragg (1973), humanists deem “creating conditions for free development of individuals and groups in the form of prosperity, equity, legality, participation, and self government,” and Dominic addresses the same. He finds people in the city live in their ‘own island’ without caring even about the death of their neighbors. They do not exercise humanism and confine themselves to their inhuman actions. On the other hand, village is a place:

where all live
in harmony and love.
They are gullible-
so fooled and cheated
and looted by the townsmen.

(“City Versus Village”, *Winged Reason*, 72)

The poet’s exposure of the loss of human values is commendable. He points out the evils of kidnapping children in “Anand’s Lot” and ascertains the mental trauma of the kidnapped children who are made to beg for the kidnappers. Readers could not help shedding tears when the persona of the poem, after having immersed his eyes on the pupils in ‘tempting uniforms’ remarks:

How happy were those days!
Mummy gave me kiss and ta-ta;
like butterflies flew to the school
with Rajesh, Praven, and Smitha
chattering, singing, dancing, running.
Alas! Like a vulture came the car then;
picked me in and dashed away.

(“Anand’s Lot”, *Winged Reason*, 26)

Humans should treat non-human others on par with them. In “A Sheep’s Wail”, the poet expresses his love for animals and exposes humans’ lack of attention to them. The Sheep, persona on the poem, reveals how humans ignore the rights of animals and butcher them mercilessly. It blames humans, for shearing its fur given by God, for sucking and draining the milk for its lamb, and for killing it along with its kith and kin. Further, it censures humans as the cruelest and the most ungrateful of God’s creations and questions:

Nothing can be more absurd!
Aren’t we His children?
How can He forgive you?
If a heaven is there
We will reach there first
And pray to God to shut you out.

(“A Sheep’s Wail”, *Winged Reason*, 25)

In “Ammini’s Lament” and in “Ammini’s Demise”, the poet reveals his tender nature and his acceptance of non-human others as his constituent part. In “Ammini’s Lament”, he pictures how his pet cat Ammini could not stop its ‘incessant cry’ over ‘the loss of her darlings’ that had been sold by the poet in a ‘weak moment’ when ‘troubles increased’. The poet and his wife shared the sorrow of their dear Ammini and ‘the pangs of’ his heart was a ‘laughing-stock’ to his guests. Kurtz (1988) opines that “There is a deeper aspect to the ethical life, however: moral awareness is rooted within our nature as human beings. There is a built-in dependency relationship based on socio-biological roots and cultural conditioning, and this reflects itself in our emotions” and the same is expressed by the poet. In “Ammini’s Demise”, the poet captures his sorrow over the loss of his poisoned Ammini and questions:

How could that fiend
poison this angel?
What harm had it
done to him?

(“Ammini’s Demise”, *Winged Reason*, 65)

Humans should revere Nature and abstain from looting its resources. The poet informs humans about the sanctity of Nature through “I am Just a Mango Tree”. He asserts that humans could learn from a tree. He also pictures how the Mango tree has fulfilled the plan of the Creator by serving others. It shelters the student-friends, gifts people with its fruits, and offers its lap to sleep. Further, the poet exposes the selfish nature of humans. As the humans desire to construct a waiting shed, they want to cut the Tree. The Tree is perplexed and for its prayer, God replies:

‘My child, I created him
in my own Image
but he’s gone astray;
My agony is endless.
That’s the fate
of the Father everywhere.
I shouldn’t have created this human species;
But how can a father kill his sons?’

(“I am Just a Mango Tree”, *Winged Reason*, 41)

The poet announces how humans have lost even their sleep, owing to their unnatural ways of life in “Sleepless Nights”. The poet feels that birds sleep peacefully all through night as they obey the norms of nature whereas humans have lost all their peace and spend their nights without sleep.

The poet’s philosophy on the various aspects of human life is par excellence. In “Beauty”, he exalts inner beauty as real and terms physical beauty temporal and unworthy. He assures that nothing on this earth is ugly as all things are created by God. Further, he says physical beauty fades like a flower’s and is forgotten once its life is over. On the other hand, achievements of humans earn them eternal beauty and “only spiritual beauty gives eternal joy” (“Beauty,” *Winged Reason*, 28). The poet reveals the bliss of married life in “Connubial

Bliss". He declares that male and female are made for each other and none can reject pains and pleasures as they are 'God's own gifts'. Further, he ascertains that marriage brings heaven on earth and it helps humans to fulfill the plans of the Supreme Being. The poet captures the true nature of old age and warns the youth who neglect old people in "Old Age". He reveals that life cycle of humans becomes complete with old age and it humbles the 'monarch of yesterday'. Further, he points out the apathetic attitude of the children toward their aged parents and warns:

Ageism is contemptible;
unpardonable too.
Today's torturer tomorrow's victim;
we live with ironies.

(“Old Age”, *Winged Reason*, 52)

In "Pleasures and Pains", the poet considers pleasures and pains as a part of human life and avers that:

Pleasures and pains:
two sides of a coin.
We toss it early morning;
majority gets the pains side.
pleasures come like sprinkles,
while pains fall like a deluge
and continue like monsoon.
Happiness is a mist
while sorrows shower like snow.

(“Pleasures and Pains”, *Winged Reason*, 68)

The poet acknowledges the greatness of women and asserts their dignity and independent nature in "International Women's Day". He considers women as the harbinger of all lives and commends them for their service to humanity. At the same time, he exposes the cruelties imposed on them and reveals the narrow mindedness of patriarchal society. He exposes patriarchy thus:

Woman is the game!
Birth to death,
an instrument of lust
and hot-selling sex!
Her very birth ill omen:
an unwelcome event.
No guilt in foeticide;
foeticide is matricide;
no life without mother.

(“International Women's Day”, *Winged Reason*, 42)

Humans should not usurp the property of other humans and should live by their own labor. The poet emphasizes the dignity of labor in “Lal Salaam to Labour.” He considers laborers as the ‘backbone of the country’ and believes that the service they render to the society cannot be repaid. Moreover, he feels that people live because of the labor of the laborers and they should not ignore their plight. The poet finds that the laborers build houses but have no home to stay. They clean roads and markets but are avoided by the common men. Further, he calls:

Let us not be unjust
when we pay them wages,
for we can’t do what they do.

Give them at least their due;
the more we give, the more we get;
Put charity in humanity
a spiritual bliss that never dies.

(“Lal Salaam to Labour”, *Winged Reason*, 45)

Thus, the analysis reveals how the poet declares his faith in humanism through his treatment of human life, divine play, politics, Indian democracy, poverty, natural calamity, division in society, religious hypocrisy, Nature, village vs city, kidnapping, love for animals, independence of women, and dignity of labor. Moreover, the analysis reveals the poet’s faith in didactic poetry and ascertains the relevance of his writing to the present-day world.

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Chapter 3 - An Angel in Flight: A Critique of K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason* by Dr. Sudhir K. Arora

Though K. V. Dominic (b. 1956) in his debut poetic collection, titled *Winged Reason* (2010), claims to be much influenced by Jayanta Mahapatra for the cause of poetry that lies in a “bad heart” and Robert Browning for his conversational mode, he is neither difficult like the former nor ambiguous like the latter. He is a poet with feelings and nothing else. As plain and simple in living, he breathes poetry in an unsophisticated fashion that offers an outlet to his conscience that articulates “an emotion or a message often through social criticism” (*Winged Reason*, 12). For him, the content is more important than the style. He himself admits that his poems “lack much imagery and other figures of speech” (*Winged Reason*, 12). It does not mean that he does not know how to adorn a poem but it is simply because of his poetic agenda that “poetry should be digestible” (*Winged Reason*, 12) so that an ordinary reader may also grasp the meaning and make his life worth living with an idea that developed because of “arrows and thorns” that pierced his heart, resulting in the gushing of the blood, which filled his pen that penned the agony on the paper. He likes to call poetry “cuckoo” and feels proud of himself that in his mature years the bird made her nest from where she sings to the extent that his mind that wishes for wings begins to sing songs of man, nature, and God.

The poet in Dominic knows well that “pains and pleasures” are “God’s own gifts” (*Winged Reason*, 29) though pleasures “come like sprinkles” (*Winged Reason*, 68) while “pains fall like a deluge” and “continue like monsoon” (*Winged Reason*, 68). He is in love with the Sun, which becomes the symbol of knowledge and virtues and, hence, advises the lass to “be like the sun” so that she may brighten the dark world with her “inner beauty”, which is true and worth longing in comparison with the “bodily beauty”, which is “all subjective and relative” (*Winged Reason*, 28). What God has created is beautiful. It is cuckoo that inspires man to love and labor for making life meaningful. It is she who lives “singing and loving” while “man exists / sweating and moaning” (*Winged Reason*, 30). He is shocked to learn that “criminal actions” are committed, “superstitions survive”, “Communalism is strangled”, “Terrorists butcher thousands”, “Sexism prevails” (*Winged Reason*, 69) in the name of God. Why does “worm-like man” challenge “the creator”? Om, a word with three letters in Hindi or Sanskrit “representing Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma” (*Winged Reason*, 66) is not only a “key to all problems of the world” but also “a tonic to mind and body” (*Winged Reason*, 66). He wishes for peace and prosperity in the world and so wishes to go on a blissful voyage. He longs for:

If I could fly like an angel,
 would plead all prophets
 to inspire and instill humanism
 in millions' communal minds.

(*Winged Reason*, 21)

The poet's heart cries when he sees injustice and exploitation done to woman who, for a man, remains a game throughout her life right from her birth to death. It is tragic that in spite of claim for women empowerment, she is still considered "an instrument of lust / and hot-selling sex" (*Winged Reason*, 42). How ironical is that her birth becomes "ill omen"! She is "chained in kitchen" (*Winged Reason*, 42) and remains dependent because of no education. She is "born to be dictated" (*Winged Reason*, 43). She "bears the pangs of child-bearing; / endures the rearing of her children" but "her love and sacrifices / remain unrewarded" (*Winged Reason*, 43). As she is treated as 'Other' in spite of her female heroism, which is neglected by patriarchy, the poet favors her and so becomes the champion for her cause as she is an angel—the angel that plays different roles successfully—roles of being mother, sister, wife, guide, teacher, and nurse. He shows his sympathy for a mother who appears at the examination but feels restless because of the cries of her baby that she hears. The problem with her is that she fails to concentrate on her examination in spite of the fact that she knows all answers to the questions. Though she has graduated, she is unemployed. Her husband, who has to support the family of seven members, is the "sole earner of the family" (*Winged Reason*, 73). She does not know what to do—whether she should quit the exam and feed her child or not. Her story brings tears in the eyes of the poet as well as the reader.

No doubt, God has created all equal but it is man's evil mind that has categorized man into "Have and Have-nots". It is man who, for his selfish motives, has uprooted nature and disturbed the plan of nature. He has made "deadly weapons" which have become "a great threat / to life itself" (*Winged Reason*, 36). It is tragic that the minority 'Haves' enjoys "at the cost of majorities' necessities" (*Winged Reason*, 36). Religions offer "no solace and hope / to the miserable multitudes" (*Winged Reason*, 37). Equality is merely a utopian ideal for the Have-nots that take shelter in "socialism and communism", which believe in "no private property; / state-owned wealth; / selfless work for the society" (*Winged Reason*, 37). But, unfortunately, it is capitalism that dominates the Have-nots and crushes "their dreams of health and happiness" (*Winged Reason*, 37). Corruption that has entered politics has paralyzed Indian democracy, which has become a mockery in spite of being the largest in the world. Democracy is not bad, but the politicians have defiled it with crimes for their personal gains. Secularism is butchered; casteism is in the air and "regionalism and parochialism / devour / nationalism and patriotism" (*Winged Reason*, 60). Election campaign is nothing except "fireworks of lies and abuses" (*Winged Reason*, 60). Those who have criminal records stand in the election and get victory with the help of muscle power. Even politics is played in the name of help to Tsunami camps where "Government gave kits and boxes" without "essential things" (*Winged Reason*, 33). It is sad that the money worth crores collected in the name of relief is "hoarded in the government exchequer / or diverted for some other

purposes” (*Winged Reason*, 33). The people in the camps cry for food and pure water but remain unheard by the authorities.

What makes Dominic extraordinary is his love for juxtaposing the contrasts. He puts diametrical points of view, keeps mum, and leaves the reader to ponder over the situation. He does not believe in imposing his opinions or viewpoints; rather he offers choices to the reader. He sees a nightmare in which he becomes a hawk. He sees a fat boy being beaten by his mother, who is forcing him to eat more while on the other side, there is “a bony child” who is “crying for a crumb” (*Winged Reason*, 22). He sees a boy in tears, standing on the verandah in the hot weather of forty degree because of “a punishment for not wearing his tie” (*Winged Reason*, 22). The poet makes the reader think over the “slavish mimic” of wearing a tie which is simply “a legacy of the West” (*Winged Reason*, 22). Does it not sound strange that there is a long queue of men, including queue jumpers, for getting liquor from a government liquor shop while on the other side, there is a long queue of “poor women” who “wait for their rations” (*Winged Reason*, 22). He sees a water tap making “the road a black river” (*Winged Reason*, 22) while on the other side, he sees “a waterless tap / laughing at the hopeless wait / of all the pots of the neighbourhood” (*Winged Reason*, 23). He sees a double-storeyed edifice equipped with modern amenities, where an old man with his wife sits “at the phone with sighs and moans” longing “for the calls from the sons abroad” (*Winged Reason*, 3) while on the other side, he sees the slums where “three generations live in each hut; / grandpa, grandma, their sons and their wives, / and their little kids sleep in a room” (*Winged Reason*, 23). He offers *lal salaam* to labourers who “sow the seed; / reap the corn” (*Winged Reason*, 44) not for themselves but for others who “eat and sleep” (*Winged Reason*, 44). How ironic it is that they “build houses / where they never rest” (*Winged Reason*, 44)! Without them, it is impossible to think of life. Hence, in a moralistic tone, he asks man not to be “unjust” in giving wages to them. He should not forget that “the more we give, the more we get” (*Winged Reason*, 45) and, hence, it is better to “put charity in humanity” which is “a spiritual bliss” (*Winged Reason*, 45). The poet sees the people of the city who remain “busy and selfish, / devoid of humanity” (*Winged Reason*, 71) to the extent that they are lost in their own islands. But, the people of the village who “live in harmony and love” (*Winged Reason*, 72) are “fooled and cheated / and looted by the townsmen” (*Winged Reason*, 72). The poet puts the city and village side by side and leaves the reader to reflect.

The poet lives in Kerala, a state known as “God’s own land”. Onam is a national festival celebrated with zeal and zest for ten days, beginning with a harvest festival Atham. Regional fragrance can be felt when “children run for flowers, / make pookalams” (*Winged Reason*, 53), people wear new dress, relish “ceremonial food”, take pleasure in Onam songs, Onam plays, and Onam dances and participate in competitions. The sight of boat racing becomes “a pageant of rare beauty” (*Winged Reason*, 54). The festival of Onam is associated with Maveli, a just king who comes to visit Kerala on this pious day. The poet loves nature that is adorned by God with the brush. The beauty of “snow-capped mountain” and “multi-coloured sky” fills his heart with love and wonder. He weeps over the selfishness of man who disturbs “the earth’s balance” (*Winged Reason*, 41). The mango tree complains against man’s materialistic attitude urging God to withdraw him so that the planet may turn into a paradise. It bears “fruits for others” (*Winged Reason*, 40), provides shelter to birds, drops

“mellow yellow fruit” (*Winged Reason*, 40) to the beggar friend and feels happy because of “the fruit of service” (*Winged Reason*, 41).

But, it is man who, out of material gains, thinks of cutting the mango tree who cries: “Don’t I have feelings and pains / though I endure in silence! / Haven’t I the right to live? / God, why is your Man so selfish and cruel” (*Winged Reason*, 41)? Not to talk of nature, man also exploits animals for his selfish motives. A sheep complains that what is given to it by God is taken by man who has conquered because of “some special powers” (*Winged Reason*, 24). It is man who shears its fur to make himself cosy, sucks the milk, and grows “fat and cruel”. The sheep calls man “the cruelest” and ‘the most ungrateful / of all God’s creations” (*Winged Reason*, 25) and wishes to enter heaven first so that it may pray to God for closing the gate for him. The poet leaves his teenage hobby of catching the fish when he imagines that he is himself a fish that has been “pulled from the sky” (*Winged Reason*, 48). He now feels that catching the fish is merely a “sadistic pleasure” (*Winged Reason*, 48) and, hence, spends most of his time in “reflections on life” (*Winged Reason*, 48). He becomes conscious so much that he thinks that “man has no right / to torture any other being” (*Winged Reason*, 76) because of the same father God. He becomes a vegetarian and follows the Gandhian way of life. He becomes sad over the demise of the cat named Ammini, who was poisoned to death by some wicked man. It is also tragic that thousands of such fiends “inhabit this planet” and turn “the earth to a big slaughter house” (*Winged Reason*, 65). The poet’s heart prays to God to make the fiends “humane”.

The poet in Dominic is sympathetic to Anand who was kidnapped and forced to begging. When Anand sees the pupils “in tempting uniforms” (*Winged Reason*, 26), he remembers his mummy, who used to give him a kiss and ta-ta. But, the kidnapping incident has changed his fate and made him a beggar. It is an incident of past when he left his mom, dad, and Smitha. He wonders whether they recall him or not. When he is lost in his past days, he is slapped by the bearded man, who threatens him to go to the shops for begging. The sight of the blind Helen pierces the heart of the poet, who lectures for the Rasa theory through “the analogy of the lamp and the pot” (38) to make the students understand “how the lamp reveals the pot” (*Winged Reason*, 38). But, Helen’s eyes search for the lamp and the light. She is a brilliant student, who has read a lot through her brother’s eyes. It is a paradox that light that sees all cannot see itself. She is “the light of the class” (*Winged Reason*, 39) fighting against “darkness”.

The poet presents the case of Laxmi, who is still not married while her colleagues are married. She is an able girl fit for being “a lamp to any house” (*Winged Reason*, 46) but this lamp is “destined to burn out” because of dowry, which she fails to provide. She has to support her family with her meager salary of two thousand. She has pricked her “bubble of dreams” and wishes none to dream for her. The poet also sympathizes with Rahul who is turned out from the class by the teacher because of his failure in completing homework. He fails not because of his own fault but because of his drunken father, who beats his mother and him. For him, the world seems to be cruel by virtue of “cruel father / cruel teacher” and, hence, “longs for love” (*Winged Reason*, 55). The poet is much impressed by Vrinda, who turns “her challenge to strength and success” (*Winged Reason*, 57). She is a girl with one leg but in spite of that, she dances like “a peacock to Hindi film tunes” (57). The poet’s heart

starts aching and interrogates: “Why is destiny so cruel” (*Winged Reason*, 57)? This is the world full of ironies. One who tortures today becomes a victim tomorrow. For him, “ageism is contemptible” (*Winged Reason*, 52).

Gayatri, who became a widow at thirty-five, is now eighty-two years old. She lives alone in “the palatial house” equipped with modern facilities. The children think that she lives happily but the reality is that she has become “an old lily flower / pale and faded” (*Winged Reason*, 31). She longs for “her children’s calls” and remains “lonely”. The thing that is striking in his poetry is that he uses the name just opposite to its meaning. Anand begs, though his name suggests pleasure or happiness. Helen means the brightening or shining one, but in the poem, she is blind. Laxmi is the goddess of wealth but here she has no amount for her dowry, the result of which is that she is unmarried. Rahul, the meaning of which is ‘capable’, is also the name of Siddhartha’s son, but here Rahul is incapable of doing his homework. Vrinda, whose name suggests ‘cluster of flower’ and also symbolizes ‘virtue and strength’, is a girl who dances with one leg. The name of Gayatri, who is the consort of Brahma, means hymn or song. But here, Gayatri, the widow, lives alone. Hence, Dominic has used the names for the characters that are antithetical and different to what their names indicate.

The poet in Dominic is also much influenced by some characters, who played a significant role in his life directly or indirectly. He writes in memory of his friend George Josen, who died in a car accident on May 14, 2004. The poet’s heart feels grief and pain when he sees Josen’s youngest kid kissing his face and plucking flowers and tossing them to her lamenting sisters. Josen proved himself fast in everything, even in death. He finds that “life is uncertain” (*Winged Reason*, 17) and “we are all / bound by His will / to be here / or to be away” (*Winged Reason*, 18). As he becomes stoic, he thinks that “the best is to resign / to what He ordains / in time and out of time” (*Winged Reason*, 18). He does not believe when he comes to know about E. K. Nayanar’s death. People come even in rain to pay homage to Nayanar, “a true communist” bubbling with “compassion and love” (*Winged Reason*, 19). He was a true fusion of “rhetoricians and statesmen” with “no foes, only friends” (*Winged Reason*, 20). It was he who “championed the cause of the denied / and the deprived” (*Winged Reason*, 20). The poet does not forget to pay his regard to the teacher Kaumudi, who remained “a lone fighter, a role model; / a single woman to fulfil her mission” (*Winged Reason*, 74). In her teens, she joined the politics and followed Gandhi, who was much impressed when she offered her ornaments. She passed an unassuming life and taught Hindi. She is a rare gem that “dimmed / the dazzle of all other women in jewels and ornaments” (*Winged Reason*, 75). The poet loves Michael Jackson, who challenged the white in dance and staked his health “for the fulfillment of art” (*Winged Reason*, 77).

The poet in Dominic is an angel who searches for the angelic qualities in men and when he misses, he motivates them through his poems offering choices by displaying the two contrasting pictures. It is his heart that realizes the importance of Keats’ line “a thing of beauty is a joy forever” and, so, values the beauty of mind and beauty of character. He makes others believe that the loss will result in “sorrow forever” (*Winged Reason*, 64). He wishes that no other Bush may kill the people in Iraq. Hence, he likes to have “the claws of a vulture” so that he may “fetch the skeletons from Iraq” and “build a bone-palace” in order

to “imprison Bush in it” (*Winged Reason*, 21). On the winged reasons, he makes a flight of his imagination but does not soar high because he knows the reality of life that he has to live on this very earth, which is “the home for all” and, so, “all should hear the heartbeat of others” (Blurb).

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Chapter 4 - K. V. Dominic's *Multicultural Symphony*: A Critique

by Dr. Sudhir K. Arora

In a churchyard Gray
releases anonymous poems
fiction blows the candle.

(Khatri, 69)

This Haiku from C. L. Khatri's *Two-Minute Silence* reveals the truth about the fate of poetry in the present-day scenario, which favors fiction that has dominated the scene and brought poetry from the centre to the periphery. Notwithstanding this miserable state of poetry, many poets continue to light the candle with the hope that one day the world will understand them and apply what they have recommended through their poems, which is the rich storehouse of knowledge and wisdom.

K. V. Dominic is one of the poets who believe in poetry and its capacity to impart values to the world. He finds poetry as “the best and easiest medium to impart messages and values to the people” (*Multicultural Symphony*, 7). He discovers the world, dotted with the colors of evil, alienation, separation, disease, selfishness, wickedness, and oppressions. He cries to see the miserable plight of his countrymen and so wishes to do something for them but “the tragic irony is that none listens to the poets nowadays” (*Multicultural Symphony*, 7). People have developed the materialistic attitude, which has changed the way of seeing and living life. The poet in Dominic holds media and internet responsible for the lack of interest in serious thinking. People avoid intellectual and metaphysical discussion for the sake of the materialism. Matter matters. In spite of the fact that “The tragic fate of poetry is universal and the poets are ignored worldwide” (*Multicultural Symphony*, 7), he continues to pen the pain that he feels when he sees the miserable plight of his countrymen, who do not hesitate even to interfere the world of birds, animals, fauna, and flora.

What matters for Dominic in composing poetry is content, not form. He believes in the authority of content over form and thinks that form will take care of itself and open naturally its arms to take content within. He himself admits: “Since the content of the poem is most important to me, I don't mind if the lines lack the luster of style” (*Multicultural Symphony*, 10). Searching for the fusion of feelings and thoughts in the garb of images is useless because he attempts to pack every line with matter so that the reader may forget the form under the influence of the matter. To some extent, his poetry results from the newspaper reports and this habit of penning poems out of them makes him a poet ready with

the news to awaken the consciousness of the people toward the evils so that they may have feelings in the hearts, suffering with the disease of materialism, which makes them selfish to the extent that they do not hesitate to kill their fellow beings for the sake of their material benefits. Hence he is a poet with contents, not with poetic style.

His poetry is a beautiful combination of soft words that have the power to evoke feelings. He knows the art of saying with poetic touches which penetrate the heart, if not the mind. He writes to convince with what he offers. He does not intend to make the reader visualize the idea, which comes out of the amalgamation of the images and the figures. He misses it on purpose because he knows that today the reader has no time to go into the depth of the philosophical and the metaphysical ponderings. He offers poetry—the poetry for a common man, who cannot perform the mental gymnastics with the images and the figures. He writes with a message—the message of cosmopolitanism, which makes every being to live in harmony. To him this universe seems to be “a big concert or symphony, a harmony of diverse notes” (*Multicultural Symphony*, 8). The multicultural symphony present in the vast universe justifies the title of this poetry collection.

In India there is unity in diversity. Diversity leads to multiculturalism, which is a positive term. Multiculturalism is new wine in the old bottle of diversity. But this term is more misused or ill-used than used in positive mode. It is the right term for promoting and acknowledging multiple cultures. To acknowledge diversities and differences results in a healthy relationship among the people who are free to promote their cultures without encroaching on others' space. Various cultures are the bunch of variety of flowers in the bouquet of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism does not force to cook various ingredients in order to turn them into one kind of food. Rather, each ingredient seems to have its own uniqueness. Its uniqueness is its beauty. Language communicates; communication makes interaction possible with different cultures resulting in acknowledging the differences, which finally give birth to multiculturalism. The concept of multiculturalism is favored not because of diversities but because of its being a possible way of protecting the local culture of a particular place or nation, which certainly is a promoting factor in making the global cultural diversity rich and safe. Cultural diversity is not a sin; rather it has become a virtue. One can learn what is best in other cultures and leave what clashes with the basic cultural structure. Multiculturalism provides multiple approaches to life and vision and helps in understanding the extremes—cultural interface and cultural seclusion. What translates justice into reality is not the yardstick from one culture but cultural communications via dialogs among multiple cultures. The magic is done by the idea of multiculturalism, which offers possibilities to several different cultures for coexisting peacefully and fairly. (Arora, 9–10)

The poet in Dominic believes in multiculturalism and considers it a harmony of diverse notes. He asks his fellow beings to realize the need for multicultural existence. He attempts to make them understand thus:

The entire system
is a grand concert
composed by the Sole spirit
As matter and spirit
animate and inanimate
visible and invisible
tangible and intangible
audible and inaudible
movable and immovable
are instruments multitudinous
of His perfect symphony.

(Multicultural Symphony, 15)

For him the diversity is the very essence of universe and this essence is present in every atom. The beauty of the universe lies in its diversity. All human beings are participatory beings, participating in the execution of this beautiful creation—the Universe of God, who is none other than the Being of all beings. The poet is no doubt a Christian, but he believes in the Advaita philosophy as he sees the part of ‘Being’ in all his fellow beings. He recommends to flow with the system without interrupting or encroaching on the animal world, flora and fauna, because they have their value and without them existence will be an impossibility. The poet sees the presence of multicultural beauty everywhere and in every object—animate or inanimate.

Multicultural instincts
exist in all creations
Inanimate beings know
how to flow with the system
Plant world too is
well aware of the system
Look at the woods
Look at the wild
Look at the birds
Look at the fish
Multicultural beauty everywhere.

(Multicultural Symphony, 16)

The poet does not differentiate and so asks his fellow beings not to create or make differences. Differences may lie on surface, but there is somewhere interconnection or unity that binds all objects together in one thread. A cow is a cow. Why does a man differentiate a cow on the basis of nationality? This is Indian cow and this is American cow. It is the human being who creates the difference while initially a cow is a cow and vice versa. The poet has firm faith that the part of Being (God) is present in every participatory being. Hence, there is no use boasting of one’s culture or language. It is better to respect all cultures and give space to each one for its growth and progress. One’s culture or language is not pure as it takes the

good ingredient from other cultures as well. Hence there is possibility of it being hybrid in essence.

Is there any culture
which is not hybrid?
Is there any language
which is not mixed?

(Multicultural Symphony, 22)

The poet is grieved when he finds that millions of people are killed in the name of culture for claiming one's supremacy or superiority over others. He simply asks these people, who call themselves Indian: how much are they Indian?

How many millions have been killed
in the name of culture?
Look into the pages of history
Most of the wars have been waged
for the supremacy of culture
Conquest of cultures over cultures
amalgamated to multicultural world
How much Indian is an Indian?

(Multicultural Symphony, 22)

What the poet dreams is unity—the unity that fuses all the people and all the nations into one. THE WORLD is the only one nation which he recommends because only then every participatory being will be able to live in harmony with the harmonious relations. Mark the excerpt, which reveals the poet's utopia, which promotes THE WORLD as one nation:

Let there be no India, Pakistan, or China
America, Africa, Europe, or Australia
But only one nation THE WORLD
where every being lives in perfect harmony
as one entity in multicultural world

(Multicultural Symphony, 23)

What makes the poet a participatory being in this universe is his philosophy of advaita. He sees the image of being in all—birds, animals and vegetation. He recalls the past when the participatory being used to be in harmony with all—be they cats, dogs, cows, goats, or fowls. But today the cycle moves in the reverse direction. He is grieved when he sees man differentiating not only among men but also among the birds and animals. Man becomes worse than animal when he kills them and does not allow others to live with parity. Mark the lines which reveal the poet's pain through questions:

When will we begin to love
kites, eagles, bats, owls
as we long for parrots, cuckoos,
skylarks and nightingales?

When will we stop the massacre
of animals, birds and fish
and learn to respect
other beings and their right to live?

(Multicultural Symphony, 51)

Man comes alone and goes alone when he dies. This is with all the people who fail to understand that even their inhaling also depends on the exhaling of the plants. Here is an excerpt which reflects the gist of the life of man, who returns empty-handed to the place from where he comes:

He fails to learn
and millions fail to learn
that God is the sole owner
Empty-handed we come
Empty-handed we go
We inhale what plants exhale

(Multicultural Symphony, 28)

The poet explores his identity. When his superego asks him who he is, his Id responds with the feeling of pride, saying that he is Prof. Dominic and besides this, he is an English poet, critic, and editor. But the superego makes him realize that even an illiterate farmer is greater than him. Sweat is preferred to scribbling. His life depends on the ordinary beings, like a farmer or a laborer. Hence it becomes his pious duty to write on them and support them.

Labourers' sweat is dearer than you ink;
If they strike, your writings will cease,
and ultimately you yourself will disappear.
Hence support them and write on them;
Proclaim to the world the noble
service they render to the humanity.

(Multicultural Symphony, 64)

The poet's heart cries when he sees discrimination against the fair sex. He himself admits: "Sexism or discrimination shown to woman as part of patriarchy is another wounding thorn, which forces me to react through poetry" (*Multicultural Symphony, 9*). Why does a human being discriminate male or female while the animal world does not know even the word 'discrimination'? The birth of a female child becomes an omen to the extent that they are "butchered / before they are born" (*Multicultural Symphony, 18*). Parents also take them not as dear ones but as "burden to family" and so are confined to home, particularly kitchen, where she is compelled to work from morning till late at night. She sacrifices her 'self' and desires in the name of the family. In the kitchen, she "fights with utensils", cries within and dies while crying. Crying is her destiny.

She is born with a cry

goes on crying and crying
till she reaches
her destination death.

(Multicultural Symphony, 19)

No doubt she is “the lamp of house” but this lamp becomes a victim of sexism, “a product of patriarchy” (*Multicultural Symphony, 19*), which never allows their entries in certain places like churches, mosques, and temples where they cannot choose their career to serve despite their longings and interest. A woman is created out of Adam’s bone. Why is she not taken as counterpart? Today she is no better than a product in the global market where her beauty is for sale. She has her body to which she owns the sole right. The poet conveys a message to the people so that they may respect a woman as a woman, not a woman as merely a body or a commodity for commercial benefits.

Why is she viewed
as a consumer product?
Why do you look at her
with lascivious eyes?
Hasn’t she right over her body?
Why do you dictate her apparel?
Why do you forget
that she is your mother
she is your wife
she is your sister
or she is your daughter?

(Multicultural Symphony, 20)

The poet feels humiliated when he sees women treated no better than shoes, which are thrown away when they become useless. He fails to understand why mothers and wives, in their old age, become a burden to their young relatives. Mark the poet’s musings on the plight of women who are no better than shoes in the patriarchal society:

Women too are often treated like shoes
Mothers and wives when old and weak
Become burden to sons and husbands

(Multicultural Symphony, 58)

Religion has done more harm than help in the lives of men. It is tragic that man becomes a puppet in the hands of certain religious masters, who make him dance to their tunes. The poet refers to marriages that are arranged according to the horoscopic tallies with the intention that they may be successful. If it is so, why there are cases of divorces. He finds the deceit in the name of horoscope. He considers that these religious masters or pundits exploit the common people and their faith. He does not find the way out of this vicious circle meant for trapping people in the name of religion. He is not against religion as he is a devout Christian. But he is against all kinds of superstitions and malpractices done in the name of religion. Ponder over the excerpt exposing the reality of these religious mafias:

Do horoscopic matches bring happiness and peace?
Why then cases of thousands of divorces?
Peace and happiness are fruits of Karma
Horoscope is the product of religious mafia
A means to exploit laity's ignorance
Millions are trapped in this vicious circle
No sign of redemption in near future (*Multicultural Symphony, 25*)

The poet in Dominic sometimes becomes so innocent that he wishes to enter the memory lanes while sitting on Time's shoulder. He wishes to return to the days of his youth when he was quite happy with his real friends, who showered pure love on him. But when he returns to the present time, he finds that his friends are not as innocent and pure as the friends of his youth. Mark the excerpt which reveals the poet's longing for the friends of yore because they were not selfish like today's friends:

I wish I could sit on Time's shoulder
and fly back to my youth
I could then be jolly
with my friends and colleagues
who bathed me with pure love
which flowed from their surging hearts
I do have friends today
who are selfish, fake and fraud (*Multicultural Symphony, 44*)

The poet's heart weeps when he sees the condition of the poor people, who do not have enough to eat. He finds a monstrous gap between 'Have' and 'Have-not' and its tragic consequence, which makes poor poorer and rich richer. The poet admits: "The fast widening gap between the poor and the rich—the vast majority deprived of food and shelter, indirectly caused by the greed of the two or three percent rich—bleeds my heart and results in several poems" (*Multicultural Symphony, 9*). The greed is responsible for such a miserable plight. The truth is that even today there are thousands of children who are famished, not in India only but in the other countries also. The poor sustain themselves on the leftover of the rich. It is a tragedy that the ten percent rich rule the rest of the ninety percent. What an irony!

Leftovers of the
ten percent Haves
can sustain
ninety percent Havenots
and make this hellish world
a blissful heaven.

(*Multicultural Symphony, 49*)

The poet thinks of shoes and relates them to the plight of the proletariat. They have their labor for sale and the rich people have capital to buy. They are in work as long as they are useful. The moment they are not useful, they are thrown away.

Same is the plight of proletariat
 They are shoes worn by the rich
 Service being complete
 they are spat out like curry leaves (*Multicultural Symphony*, 58)

The poet is in a dilemma and does not know what to do because he has taken an oath that he will love all the creatures. He sees the part of his being in them. In his bathroom, he finds a spider, which lives on mosquitoes that bite him. How can he kill the spider when he loves all creatures? The spider is also a creature and so he should love him. Here is his short poem “A Spider in My Bathroom”, which reflects the mental state of the poet.

A spider in my bathroom
 To smite or spare?
 Lives on mosquitoes
 who inject me
 The creator has sent
 it along with mosquitoes
 Being a poet vowed
 to love all creations
 what shall I do? (*Multicultural Symphony*, 52)

He simply asks what he should do to keep his vow. It is true that man should love all creatures, but when they become a danger to the existence, it is better to kill them. Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* loves fish but he kills in order to keep himself alive. There is no harm in keeping such creatures as long as they do not harm; but the moment they become danger or create a sense of fear, it is better to keep them away because it becomes a question of existence.

The poet reviews life from morning till evening—the moment when he comes into and the moment when he departs from this world, leaving everything behind. When he is in the morning of his life, he does not find anything that may disturb or puzzle him. The lone open shop becomes the only shop for his guidance and sharing. His home becomes the only shelter where he feels at ease. When it is evening, he hears the din and bustle from all the opened stalls. Now he becomes confused because of the noise of opinions and reviews. He is on his journey with this surety that one day he will achieve the goal, but the moment he enters, he becomes astonished because of the darkness, which makes him see nothing and resulting in a mystery. Quoted below is the short poem “Sail of Life”, which makes the reader ponder over the stages of life:

My morning walk takes me
 to a tea stall
 The lone opened shop
 at the still Gandhi Square

I am astonished
 by the din and bustle

that comes out
from all opened stalls
in the evenings

My boisterous sail will reach
its harbour one day
I will be astonished
by its stillness and darkness (

Multicultural Symphony, 55)

The poet does not close his eyes to the contemporary scenario, colored with corruption, selfishness, oppression, and the like. He reflects over the problem and comes to the conclusion that the media are responsible to a great extent. He is shocked when he finds teenagers indulged in crimes. Media and its associates dish out venoms before the teenagers instead of bringing the correcting forces to light. It is shocking that they make terrorists heroes, and heroes terrorists. Mark the lines which reveal the harmful role of the media and its associates in adding fuel to fire:

Media, print and visual
forget ethics they are bound to follow
Instead of being a correcting force
to all subjects and other estates
filling minds with eternal noble values
they inject venoms of violence
communalism and superstitions
They focus terrorists and anti-heroes
Arch corrupters and human deities
And no wonder, tender minds
are bewitched by their illusion

(Multicultural Symphony, 56)

What will the people do when their representatives become corrupt? Once the leaders were the models for the nation because they never hesitated sacrificing their lives for the sake of the nation. The interest of the country was far above their self-interest. But today, politicians are quite opposite the image of the past.

Once politicians were apostles
their selfless service to the nation
lauded gratefully by the people
Now people look at them with dubious eyes
for corruption is stamped on their brow

(Multicultural Symphony, 78)

The poet weaves all the pieces of his themes in order to make his poetry collection “a symphony”. He creates a collage—the collage that displays multicultural Kerala, global warming’s real culprit, martyrs of the borders, Thodupuzha Municipal Park, the images of

Sakuntala Devi, the Siachen Tragedy, the pathetic plight of Dhanalakshmi, the heinous crime of slashing the nose of Prakash Jaatav by the high caste, the exploitation of Beena in the Mumbai Hospital, celebration of girl child's birth, Women's Cricket World Cup 2013, ACTS—Saviors on the Roads, Beach Beauticians, protest against sand mafia and the like. He is a poet with headlines because he composes poems on the incidents that took place, and to give them a real shape, he mentions the incident's date or year, or both, with the name of the newspaper in which the report was published. Simply any painful incident that occurs anywhere pierces his heart, which feels the pain of the sufferers to the extent that it shows empathy with them and spreads its pain on the white sheet.

The poet's ideal is Swami Vivekananda whom he pays a glowing tribute because of his substantial contribution that he made in making religion, a science of consciousness and "a universal experience / of transcendent Reality" (*Multicultural Symphony*, 79). He promotes religion, which leads to "Supreme Freedom, Supreme Knowledge and Supreme Happiness." Here is an excerpt showing his contribution in the field of spiritual humanism:

He laid foundation for spiritual humanism
which makes life meaningful and worth living
He taught world man should be pure
for purity is our real nature and soul
We should love and serve our neighbours
for we are all one in the Supreme Spirit (*Multicultural Symphony*, 79)

Swami Vivekananda is a spiritual saint, who is no less than a cultural ambassador because he taught the people "how to master Western science / based on Indian spirituality" and "how to adapt Western humanism / to Indian life and culture" (*Multicultural Symphony*, 79). The poet wishes to retrieve the past of India when she was a "fertile land for free and secular thoughts" and "people lived in multicultural harmony" (*Multicultural Symphony*, 78). He is grieved when he sees the present India that has now become "a hell of intolerance and religious fundamentalism." Even then he never thinks of flying away from this fruitful land. He belongs to India, and India is in his blood. Hence he is a poet of Indian landscapes—the landscapes which, despite the dark shades, have the bright colors of hope. This hope makes the poet so confident that he thinks that one day people will sing multicultural symphony and live happily while respecting each other, and then the universe will become one nation—THE WORLD, where all human beings will become participatory beings, who will be thankful to the 'Being of Beings'. Such are the feelings that flow with the flow of system from the pen of K. V. Dominic, who is determined to win the hearts of the reader by virtue of his 'content' because 'form' is not his strength.

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