

**Poetical Sensibility of  
K V Dominic's Creative Muse**



# Poetical Sensibility of **K V Dominic's Creative Muse**

*Edited by*

Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya



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## THE AUTHOR'S BIO



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Prof. Dominic is the Secretary of Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics (GIEWEC), a non-profitable registered organization having now two hundred and fifty members mainly consisting of university/college professors, research scholars and professional English writers. Prof. Dominic has conducted several national and international 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 in the Advisory and Editorial Boards of several leading journals in India. International Poets Academy, Chennai conferred on him its highest award – Lifetime Achievement Award – in 2009. India Inter-Continental Cultural Association, Chandigarh conferred on him Kalfa Inter-continental Award of Honour 'Sahitya Shiromani' in recognition of his contribution in the field of literature in 2014. PhD researches are in progress on his poetry.

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## Foreword

Prof. T. V. Reddy\*

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Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, the editor of the present collection of critical articles on the poetry of Dr. K. V. Dominic, hails from Kolkata – a place which can never be forgotten by the lovers and students of Indo-English poetry. It is a fact that Calcutta was the place of birth and development of Indo-English poetry and the entire poetry of pre-independence period was rooted in Calcutta and flourished there on the shores of Bay of Bengal. As early as in 1817 Hindu College was started in Calcutta which developed in forty years into the Presidency College where Henry Derozio was an English teacher. Indo-English poetry begins with Henry Derozio, gets stronger breath with Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Romesh Chunder Dutt and Manmohan Ghose, gets both beauty and energy from the lines of Toru Dutt, becomes lyrical and musical in the lines of Sarojini Naidu, gets international recognition with Tagore's *Gitanjali* and acquires spiritual dimension from Sri Aurobindo with his monumental spiritual epic *Savitri*. Later G. K. Chettur, P. Seshadri, K. D. Sethna, Manjeri S. Eswaran, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and others entered the field from across India and contributed their mite to the development of Indo-English poetry.

A dramatic change came after independence when the scene of poetry shifted to Bombay on the shores of the Arabian

Sea with the emergence of Nissim Ezekiel and his Bombay group of poets, mostly campus poets, though very few voices emerged from other parts of the country too. After the Independence writers such as Nissim Ezekiel, Krishna Srinivas, Keshav Malik, A. K. Ramanujam, Kamala Das, P. Lal, Adil Jussawalla, Gieve Patel, Pritish Nandy, Jayanta Mahapatra, A. K. Mehrotra, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, R. Parthasarathy, Margaret Chatterjee, Eunice de Souza, Keki Daruwalla and others contributed to the widening of the stream of Indian English poetry. Most of them tried to establish themselves as notable poets by trying to dislodge their great predecessors of the pre-independence period. Of course, an ungenerous and a vain bid! Most of the poets tried to dwell on the stereotyped aspect of alienation and the loss or missing of roots. Almost all the poets except Dr. Krishna Srinivas diverted the stream of poetry from the lyrical and national spirit to the realistic channel of social awareness or alienation. Krishna Srinivas stands apart by concentrating on the spiritual and cultural aspects. Most of the poetry of Ezekiel and his group revolves round social or personal themes with confessional tones and it is social and satirical harping on their individual views, problems and experiences, preferences and prejudices.

In the contemporary period which fairly begins from the ending days of Emergency, poetry in Indian English has vastly developed through the poetic output of writers such as Pranab Bandyopadhyay, Syed Ameeruddin, O. P. Bhatnagar, I. K. Sharma, D. H. Khabadi, I. H. Rizvi, T. V. Reddy, D. C. Chambial, P. C. K. Prem, H. S. Bhatia, R. K. Singh, Aju Mukhopadhyay, Manas Bakshi, O. P. Arora, R. N. Sinha, Pasupati Jha, Gopikrishna Kottoor, S. L. Peeran, S. Radhamani Sarma, K. V. Raghupathi, P. Raja, A. N. Dwivedy, Mamang Dai, Arbind Kumar Choudhary and others whose contribution to the

enrichment of poetry is indeed amazingly vast and varied. Most of these writers almost unaffected by the Western influence faithfully tried to present Indian sensibility in their poems which invariably draw the basic material only from Indian themes. They have experimented on varied themes and techniques and expanded the canvas of subject matter and largely succeeded in presenting social life from different fields from various angles creating impressive poetry. Prominent among the recent voices are Vinita Agarwal, Arundhati Subramanyam, C. L. Khatri, Bipin Patsani, Dalip Khetarwal, S. Padma Priya, K. V. Dominic, Rajiv Khandelwal and others. It is heartening to see that the stream of Indian English poetry with its growing wider dimensions has now acquired a distinctive image at the global level. All these writers are very much aware of the contemporary situation in all fronts, social and political, cultural and technological, and as such their writings fully reflect the social consciousness.

The tide of interest in poetry in Indian English has happily turned to the Indian shores instead of moving towards the expatriate writers or to the Indian diaspora writers. Poetry written by poets in India should get the topmost importance while the poetry written by Indians who have settled abroad should be seen in the background of the country to which they belong now. But unfortunately they are stealing the entire show leaving the insiders, in spite of their superior merit and qualitative output, eclipsed by the foreign glitter. It is high time that our University Professors and learned scholars and writers should come out of the unhealthy spell of such Indian writers who are now no longer Indian citizens and it is desirable that they should cultivate the virtue of seeing the Indian writers in their right perspective so that they get their proper due without getting overshadowed by the writers who are settlers abroad. Prof. O. P. Bhatnagar till his last breath made every endeavour

with indefatigable energy in dislodging the false gods, glorified in R. Parthasarathy's anthology *Ten Twentieth-Century Poets* (OUP, 1977), still worshipped in academic circles and cubicles of Universities where most of our Professors and scholars are blissfully ignorant of the recent voices in Indian English poetry. Poetry of the recent voices reveals an authentic voice and experience and we expect a poet to be truthful and honest in expression and in articulating his feelings and experiences.

It is in this context that the present critical work on the poetry of the contemporary poet Dr. K. V. Dominic, comprising of 30 articles and four reviews, edited by the eminent writer, scholar and critic Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya assumes importance as it deals with the insights and interpretations of the poetry of Dr. K. V. Dominic. It starts with Biswanath Kundu's article on the aspect of Nature in the poetry of Dominic which has been interpreted from a different perspective by two other writers Chitra Lele and Prof. Elisabetta Marino. They try to bring out the poet's concern at the devastation of Nature and environment and for the preservation of Nature. While the former observes poet's concern for plants and animals, the latter two find sensitivity behind simplicity of Dominic's poetry. While Dr. M. K. Chand Raj writes on the quest for social realism in Dominic's poetry and K. Pankajam dwells on social awareness in the poetry, Dr. Poonam Nigam Sahay portrays Dominic as a compassionate poet and Dr. Arbind Kumar Chowdhary makes a probing study of the poems from his perspective. Sri Lankan writer Daya Dissanayake writes on the theme of emancipation in the poetry, the noted contemporary poet Manas Bakshi from Kolkata writes on the aspect of symphony. Dr. Shweta Sood tries to strike the chords of passion as well as reason in Dominic's poetical work *Winged Reason*. Prof. Kavita Gopalakrishnan writes on the mode of

protest, resistance and empowerment in the poetry, while Dr. S. Barathi's article follows the stylistic approach of interpreting a few poems. Dr. Mousumi Ghosh makes a brilliant economic interpretation of Dominic's poems with an emphasis on poverty and inequality. Dr. Poonam Dwivedi writes on the aspect of multicultural symphony and her critical views compel our attention, while Sheeba Ramadhevan writes on the poetic vision in the poetry. The critical article of Silviya Florance S. & Dr. (Mrs.) Raichel M. Sylus deals with the aspect of word as weapon in the preservation of nature in the poetry, while Dr. Sabita Chakrobarthy probes into the poems from another angle. While the articles of Kasturi Sivaprasad and S. Padmanathan (Sopa) deal with the presentation of values and moral concerns, Dr. Sugandha Agarwal deals with contemporary social values as taken up in the poems. The eminent poet and critic Dr. D. C. Chambial writes on the book *Winged Reason* as a portrait of social realism and elaborately discusses it under various heads. Dr. S. Chelliah writes on the emergence of Dominic as poet and critic. While Dr. Trayee Sinha writes on the strength of the poet's pen and its flaming spirit, another writer Dr. Y. Vidya makes a general study of the poetry and makes a special reference to irony in the poetry. Dr. Laxmi R. Chaugan deals with the aesthetic and spiritual aspect of the poem "Write My Son, Write". While Parthajit Ghosh probes into the poetic insights, Dr. Alexander Raju writes on the poetic sparks in his poems. Nandita Bhattacharya in her review thinks that though the themes of most of Dominic's poems are taken from events reported in journals, the poet's description of the events is such that his poetry differs from journalism. Dr. Pamela Jeyaraju makes a study of K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion*, while Fr. Varghese Paul in his article considers Dominic as a humane poet. In addition to these articles there are four book reviews and three interviews printed towards the close of the book.

It goes to the credit of Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya who has scrupulously gone through all the critical articles and editing them with his scholarly touch. That he has great regard for his friend and poet Dr. Dominic is quite obvious from his remarkably written Preface. He feels that some of the themes of Dominic “apparently suggest that out and out Dominic’s views are left-oriented”. He also thinks that the poet’s concern with gender equality in the society might support his statement. Thus the scholarly editor’s insight into the poems has added a new dimension to the critical work. This collection of perceptive articles is a remarkable contribution to the critical study of the poetry of Dr. K. V. Dominic and it definitely helps in understanding the poems in their proper perspective. Dr. Dominic’s contribution to poetry in Indian English and criticism on this genre is quite significant and this critical work definitely adds to the image of Dominic as a poet by focusing greater light on his poetry. In spite of the general decline in the reading community of poetry and of the diminishing interest in poetry in this modern age of incredible technological development, the stream of poetry continues to march though with a weaker flow and in fact it continues to flow as long as there is human existence with a feeling heart.

\* **Dr. T. Vasudeva Reddy** is a renowned poet, critic & novelist of international repute. He has worked as Lecturer, Reader and U.G.C. National Fellow & Visiting Professor, and retired as Principal of Govt. Degree College in 2001. He received the Awards of International Eminent Poet in 1987, Hon. D. Litt. from the WAAC, San Francisco in 1988, Best Teacher Award at the College & University level from the Govt. of A.P. in 1990, Best Poetry award for his third poetry book *The Fleeting Bubbles* from Michael Madhusudan Dutt Academy, Calcutta in 1994, the prestigious U.G.C Award of National Fellowship in 1998 and ‘Excellence in World Poetry’ Award for the year 2009. His biography figures in the American Biographical Institute (N. Carolina, U.S.A), International Biographical Institute (Cambridge), Reference India & Asia (New Delhi) and Sahitya Akademi (New Delhi).

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## Preface

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Our anthology of essays on K V Dominic's poetry opens with the essay of Biswanath Kundu. It alludes to the lessons from plants and the action of Nature. Dominic points out that though Nature toils ceaselessly for serving others it is full of songs and mirth. Think of the cuckoo singing. But the self centred and greedy man is not happy at all. Dominic however, laments that Nature has been incurably wounded and injured by man. No Balm can cure Nature's wounds. Man prides in destroying Nature in the name of development. But Dominic observes that everything in the existence, living or inert, men and animals and plants has the right to live. But man in his pride and ignorance has forgotten this truth. Consequently there has been food scarcity and shortage of shelter for all living beings including man. Man has been divided into two classes in the Haves and Have-nots. The sorrow mickle of the have-nots and the complaints of Nature, e.g. the complaint of the Mango Tree are but perceptible. In the back ground the noiseless noise of the earth's shrieks for help are heard. Anthropocentric thought is to blame for that. Instinct and intuition are as important as reason in Dominic's epistemology. With Biswanath, Dominic belongs to the family of Wordsworth and Shelley, Rabindranath and Kalidasa as a votary of Nature. Thus Biswanath sets the discourse of Dominic, the poet rolling.

A deficient epistemology has led to serious injury of Nature and humanity torn apart into classes – haves and have-nots. Dr M K Chand Raj seems to have taken the cue from it and observes that social reforms constitute the core of Dominic's poetry. Although Biswanath apparently saw a kinship between Wordsworth and Shelley and Kalidasa and Dominic Chand Raj feels that poetry is not a romantic outburst for K V Dominic. This sounds like a paradox. But the romanticism that we find in Marlowe's 'Come [shepherd]... and be my love' is not the staple of the corpus of Dominic's poetry. Dominic in the words of Chand Raj is a one man army that wages a relentless battle against the evil forces hindering humanity's onward march to a better social order. Dominic points at the widening gap between the haves and have-nots. In our country

True growth is there in number of multi-millionaires  
who are even less than two percent

According to Chand Raj all this is due to the fact that the government is working hand in glove with the corporates. Capitalism is the villain. The ire of Dominic at the bombing of Iraq and laments of Dominic at the passing away of E K Nayanar also apparently suggest that out and out Dominic's views are left oriented. His concern with gender inequality prevalent in the society might support this statement. But if Leftism implies Marxism in the main it is only a partial reading of Dominic's views. Marxism stands on the three pillars of dialectical materialism, historical materialism and the theory of surplus values. Unlike the materialists Dominic finds pied beauty of God's grandeur in all forms. He does not believe in class struggle and armed revolution. He looks forward to a time when the rich will have the prick of conscience. With Dominic human history has been the witness of the struggle between cultures. He observes that most of the wars have been waged

for the supremacy of culture. We have to wait and see what other authors have to say on this issue. Of course Chand Raj exclaims, “I am not sure in which category, romantic, modern, postmodern – his poetry can be bracketed.”

Dr. Poonam Nigam Sahay has deftly distinguished between altruism, empathy and compassion. Compassion, in her own words, triggers an emotional response within our body and does have a desire to help overcoming that suffering. Dominic’s poetic realm is enveloped with compassion. Poonam’s write up is bathed in that Ganga or Jordan River of compassion. Poonam refers to Dr. Kumaran and observes that such compassion for all things, both great and small, would not be possible if the poet had not realised the divinity. God is Emmanuel; He is in everything and every being. This realisation flows through every vein of Dominic’s poetry. And Kumaran, alluded to by Poonam, is right when he points out that in fact writing itself is a divine inspiration. Poonam points out that Dominic has compassion for the entire universe. We fully agree with her and feel that this is what makes Dominic a great poet.

Chitra Lele a poet of no mean order in her poetic prose probes into the secret of Dominic’s poetry. She quotes Dominic. In the quote Dominic says, “The huge devastation done to the Nature and environment by sand mafia, forest mafia and quarry mafia goads me to react through my only media poetry.” This reminds of a Bengali rebel poet Nazrul Islam who frankly states:

I have gone mad seeing and hearing things  
And I speak whatever comes to my lips.

Of course there is difference between Nazrul and Dominic. While Nazrul’s poetry likens war drums Dominic’s poetry is wistful and mellow dank with the dew of universal love and

brotherhood. Besides Nazrul's trumpet voice was heard during the British Raj in India. Dominic belongs to a time when we are independent. We must look inward and streamline ourselves. That is the message of Dominic. Dominic has affinity to Nazrul just as neutrophil has affinity to neutral dye. Nazrul says, "Oh Friend! Your heart is full of greed. Your eyes are myopic because of the clouds of self-interest. Or else you would find that God plays the role of a porter to serve you." Dominic's message is the same with that of Nazrul. As Chitra observes, "In the "Siachen Tragedy" each verbal unit operates at its highest velocity and this quality of the poet can be found in numerous other poems." True. But his poetry glitters like dew drops alight with wisdom. Chitra observes, "His wise words are simple, yet intense and moving." Chitra further observes, "It is the sensitivity and sensibility of the poet that have the power to awaken and ignite the inner spark of kindness in the readers towards all aspects of our existence including Mother Nature." Dominic is indeed the poet who evokes spark of kindness. Think of a world afire with the flames of kindness.

William Wordsworth lamented at what man has made of man. Earlier Dryden laughed at the follies and foibles of man. Pope launched a biting criticism of urban values of his time. Dominic seems to follow their footprints in his criticism of man in relation to his fellowmen, in relation to Nature and in relation to God. But Dominic is not a satirist the way Pope and Dryden are. True that he chides man for his erring's and ignorance. But everywhere his essays in criticism teach us that all these vices are accidental and they could be overcome. Everywhere the inner spark of kindness is perceptible. Chitra is right. And this kindness or what Buddha would have it as karuna is bound to prepare mankind for getting emancipated. Hence quite logically Chitra's essay is being followed by Daya Dissanayake's

Emancipation through Dominic's poetry. To quote Dissanayake: "In most of Dominic's poems I find that he is trying to seek Emancipation, true emancipation for all life on Mother Earth and not just for the human beings.... The path is tough with many obstacles temptations mirages to divert us to prevent us from reaching our goals." This reminds us of the Upanisad: "Durgam pathas tat kavayorvadanti or that road is difficult according to the sage poets. The Bible also says: "Strait is the gate; narrow is the way which leadeth unto life." Dissanayake observes: "Today we are only worshipping the signboards pointing out the Path, instead of trying to move along the Path." This is a significant comment. Everywhere there are signifiers. But the signified is missing. Elsewhere he points out that most of us recite the sacred literature often in languages we do not understand. That is why the role of poetry is more and more important as one of the best and simplest mediums to take the message to the people. With F. R. Leavis the thought about life embodied in the very greatest literature has to be seen as religious thought. In an age when religion goes out of joints, poetry could function as religion. Confucius says in the *Analects*:

My children, why do you not study the Book of Poetry?  
 The ode serves to stimulate the mind  
 They might hasten self-contemplation  
 They teach us to be sociable  
 They help us to control our resentment  
 From them you learn what your immediate duties are such as  
 reverence for your father  
 From them you learn the names of birds and beasts and plants

Every requirement of poetry could be illustrated from Dominic's poetical works.

Dr. Arabind Kumar Choudhury tells us that Dominic is the suitor of Nature and its pigmented colours, fragrant flowers, running waters, blowing air, chirping birds, roaring clouds,

sparkling rainbow, bowing trees, juicy fruits etc. It reminds one of the romantic poets (cp Biswanath Kundu). Emotional eruption according to Arabind reminds one of the pupils of his namesake Shree Aurabindo. Also the Keralite poetic tradition must be taken into account to understand Dominic. Arabind posits that the cultural monarchy of Indian territory has been pointed across his verses that makes him out and out an Indian English poet. Arabind quotes the great savant T V Reddy on Dominic: "Thus Dominic is a poet with social awareness which fills almost all the lines of his poems and it is no exaggeration to say that his profound concern for the society forms the life force and breath of his poetry." With Arabind Dominic's verses has satiric tone on burning issues... ironical approach that run wild reminds one of Nissim Ezekiel. Arabind feels that Dominic as a poet stands at the junction of the Aurobindonean School and the Ezekielean School of poetry of Indian English literature. Dominic conveys us what God told him:

Petitions come to me  
 one after another  
 from plants and animals  
 All complain of your  
 cruelty and torture

Must we not mend our behaviour lest we face another Flood bombings or a third nuclear war? With Dr. Manas Bakshi this is what makes viewing Dominic's poetic voyage an experience par excellence. Manas opines that in many of Dominic's poetry the trait is overt but the gestures are covert. This is a significant remark on Dominic's style. Commonly poetry speaks in suggestions. But Dominic's style puts the content in the foreground and the poetic embellishments remain in suggestions only. It is in this context that Manas seems to assert that Dominic finds truth in beauty. To illustrate this point suffice it to quote Dominic:

When will “crow-crow” be  
pleasing as “koo-koo”?

That is, Dominic finds in the apparently pleasing koo-koo the apparently harsh crow-crow. Does it remind us something of John Donne who set a kind of significant tradition in English poetry? And it goes without saying that naked truth has its beauty as well. Rather Manas points out that the corset is overt and outer garments of Dominic’s world winning Muse is covert. This is rather postmodernity of Dominic’s style Further Manas quotes Patricia Prime and observes that Dominic blends the complex tradition of English verse into something wholly his own and the poems do so in variety of forms and via different arguments all of which amount to Dominic’s interest in social themes.

Manas told us that Dominic perceives truth in beauty. But unlike other poets Dominic is never a seeker of sensuous beauty. No people often become millionaires exploiting sex. But Dominic has not tried to be a best seller exploiting sex. Dominic’s notion of beauty has been best in the quotes from Dominic by Dr Shweta Sood:

Eternal beauty is in achievements eternal  
.....  
Only spiritual beauty gives eternal joy.

In fact nothing is ugly in Dominic’s eyes unless it is manmade. Dr Sood quotes Dominic:

No child is ugly to its mother  
Nothing can be ugly for God created it

Since God the Father created every one of us including the multiverse everything in this existence is beautiful with Dominic. It is our mind that makes them ugly and profane.

Dr Shweta Sood has ingeniously explored the drama inherent in the poetic works of Dominic. No conflict, no drama. And mark how the little child plays with the garlands caressing the dead father. The child flings the garlands playfully at her weeping sister. This is an instance of photogenic montage. If the father were alive and the little child played like that, how would the scene affect us? See the use of the dramatic contrast between the playful child and the weeping sister. And Shweta seems to comment with the poet:

What a game He plays  
When He comes riding his chariot  
None can say Wait

The chariot has a lot of meaning in the Indian context. Lord Krishna is the charioteer. He claims that he is the Time itself. The irreversible arrow of Time which is God cannot be checkmated in the contingent. In fact accidents are fait accompli in the existence. The notion of causality has been exploded. Everything is at bottom random. If that is the decree of reason, then to be unreasonable is winged reason. Intuition and instinct are as much sources of knowledge as reason. And if we make God responsible for our existence then the existence is *leela* of Indian mysticism, when no causality works.

Dr. Sood explores the drama inherent in Domini's poetical works. Then all on a sudden turns into claws flying across the blue deep. The claws function as synecdoche. They stand for vulture. We look at the skies and the claws go past our eyes rushing faster than a meteor. The vulture has an uncanny eye for skeleton. We had a glimpse of the skeleton ship in "Ancient Mariner". The Tuoi Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia has reminiscent of the horrors wreaked by the communist Pol Pot. In the skeleton ship the Life in death wins over Death in her gamble on the soul. A death in sentence is not enough for

President Bush, the war monger. Dominic pronounces life in death for President Bush in the house of the skeletons. Instantly however the anger of the poet which was the vulture is converted into compassion for mankind. Carlyle observed that the poets and prophet are one. And Dominic an ambassador of the groaning humanity dons the shape of an angel and excelsior's as an angel to the prophets that came before him praying for instilling fellow feeling among men. Dominic has the power to shift from *krrodha* or anger to *shanta rasa* or tranquility in a flash.

Dr. Sood is a connoisseur of gems and her article is loaded with gems from Dominic. Karl Marx observes that religion is an opium that lulls the common sense of the people. In *Winged Reason* Pages 69-70 Dominic shoots a thunder at religion. Let us quote four lines from the same.

God is dethroned  
in the name of God.  
And human gods are crowned  
in the name of God.

God is dethroned in the name of God – that is a paradox. Often in the world itself many wrongs are committed in the name of great men and good men. And when Dominic speaks of human gods crowned, he reminds us of the pharaoh as depicted in holy Koran. The pharaoh in the holy Koran arrogated himself as the God.

With Dominic election campaigns are firebox of lies and abuses. Election campaigns here become perceptible to the eyes and ears. They are firebox. Dominic revels in alliteration. Mark the repetition of Din: “democracy reigns / drinking tears of thousands!” And here the personification of democracy drinking tears of thousands is a powerful instance of word painting.

When Dominic says: "Corrupt governments, /draining the blood of people" the present author is reminded of a great chief minister of yore of west Bengal who asked his men to give blood to hasten the development of the thermal power project at Bakreswar in West Bengal. Countless followers including farmers and labourers literally gave blood at the call of their leader and gallons of blood were literally drained away!

Thus Dominic is a soothsayer. And yet with Dominic democracy is a better option.

Still democracy shall prevail  
or tyranny will  
sit on the Chair.

Think of tyranny sitting on the chair or democracy drinking tears. This is a scene from Morality Drama where the abstract notion of tyranny or democracy becomes a protagonist.

Dominic often repeats the same word over and over again to forge a Dantesque imagery:

Cruel father,  
Cruel teacher,  
Cruel world.  
Poor Rahul  
longs for love.

The repetition of the word 'cruel' reminds one of the word 'pale' in Keat's "La belle Dame sans Merci."

Dominic's poems are littered with antithesis:

Dawn for doom  
Dusk for dam  
What a birth!  
Elsewhere:  
Today's torturer  
Tomorrow's victim;  
We live with ironies.

It is the same with what Tagore says – if you push somebody to behind, s/he pushes you to behind. In fact Dominic studied Tagore with great sincerity. And there are some parallels between Tagore and Dominic. Like all great artists and painters Dominic brings home his message with the aid of contrast. The following paragraph written by Dr. Sood illustrates the point:

The poem “A Nightmare” strikes a bitter comparison between those who enjoy things in plenty to another group of people for whom it is even difficult to meet the two ends. The comparison is made through the image of “a hawk hovering in the sky” who during his flight, views such miserable sights that “tears” run down his “cheeks” and he does not wish to see any more of it. The poem is full of rich imagery juxtaposing affluence and dearth e.g. “an obese boy” beaten by his “mother” to “eat more” whereas a hunger stricken “child” “crying for a crumb;” “pompous guests” enjoying “rich delicacies” in a “lavish wedding feast” while “outside” the “hall” “two ragged girls”... / struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin” to satisfy their hunger; and a leaking “public water tap / that made the road a black river” whereas “a waterless tap” elsewhere mocking “at the hopeless wait / of all the pots of the neighbourhood.” In another place, Dominic’s sharp eye captures the look of an ill-fated drama of fair and foul playing at “a liquor shop run by the government” where men hover themselves in a “long queue”... / Like a line of ants before their hole” while a “similar queue” can be seen on “the other side, / where poor women” stand for hours waiting for “their rations.” The image of a “boy in tears” being punished “for not wearing his tie! / In the humid weather of forty degrees” is an apt example of “slavish” mimicry of “a legacy of the West” (*Winged Reason* 22).

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Dr Trayee Singha's essay opens with the fact that 'Indian English writing, for several decades, has expanded its repertoire in a way it could reflect all the aspects of the society'. This is especially true in the case of Dominic's poetry. He is not merely concerned with the economic disparity of our country, the horse trading in the name of politics, the damages wreaked on nature in the name of development, he also dwells on the desperate situation of the third genders or of the tribals. He dwells on the Narmada Bachao Andolan with telling powers. With Dominic they pluck the hair of Mother Earth one by one by felling trees. The mother is being raped by her own beloved son as it were. The plucking of hair one by one is an instance of

cruelty that beggar's description. Besides the hair of earth being removed one by one earth is becoming weaker than ever helpless against the infidels. And mind you does not this imagery suggest that Samson or our earth will grow hair again and the paradise will be regained?

And Dominic is no chair poet. He himself participated in the protest against the construction of Aranmula International Airport to save the villages and the famous Hindu Parthasarathi Temple. May Parthasarathi or Lord Krishna bless him! (The present author is a Hindu by the by). Earlier we have noted that the poet wishes to meet the prophets to change the hearts of men. And his book *Cataracts of Compassion*, as Dr. Trayee observes, invokes Lord Buddha to redeem the world. If we look upon the works of Dominic that opens with a hymn to Mother India we might look up the works of Dominic as an instance of Bathos. Because the other poems cry down the present state of India. It is something like the musician who played on Banjo and blew his nose. But on another level the comments of Dr. T.V. Reddy the great poet and the savant, the sage poet of our time must be noted: "Prof. K. V. Dominic constructs his poems on the solid foundations of everlasting ethical values and human considerations such as essential sympathetic understanding and tolerance which has transformed his poems into unfading flowers spreading the balmy breeze of their fragrance to distant lands and territories".

True that all the essays ranging from Biswanath Kundu to Trayee Singha have focused on the thematics of the poetry of Dominic. And Dominic himself admits that he puts the content in the foreground and his art of poetry in the background. On the surface it might agree with anti-poetry. While the contents in Dominic are overt his shrewd diction and poetic art is covert. And despite that think of Favitha. A milestone is her writing

desk; a boulder her stool; a vaka tree gives her shelter from scorching heat. The portrait of Favitha has come from real life. There are countless Favithas in our country. Despite that, with us middle class readers, it looks like vignette of a fairy world. It reminds one of Shakespeare. We, every one of us remember how the murderers attacked Malcolm's wife and child. But with Shakespeare the bleeding reality turn into a fairy land ballad: 'The thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now?' Thus the bleeding reality has transformed into unfailing flowers spreading the balmy breeze of their fragrance.

In fact the poem which brings us to the melting mood cannot exist without the way the poem has been put forward. The theme does not exist separated from the way the theme is presented. So each and every one of our essays have been very much sensitive to the style of Dominic, although the poet has not told us anything as to that. It is left to Dr. S. Barathi to delve into the style of Dominic's poetry. Dr. Barathi's essay is a priceless one for those who want to probe into stylistics. She has explained the different components of style such as syntax, parallelism, use of superlatives, foregrounding, questioning, punctuation, phonology, alliteration and so on. And she has cited appropriate examples from the poetry of Dominic to illustrate each component of style. And one who focuses on the style of a poem is apt to understand the content of a poem on a deeper level as it were. To illustrate our point let us read "Anand's Lot" with Dr. Barathi. The poem written in third person promulgates the voice of a hapless child nostalgic of his past happy life with his parents, siblings and friends. He is now brought to reality by the coarse voice of his master who forces him to beg on the street. This is a realistic poem that portrays the pangs of the young boy who longs to reunite with his family. Curiously enough the name of the protagonist is Ananda or

Bliss. Dominic points out how bliss or Ananda suffers from hungering pain and grovels in the dark. In the Inferno of the workaday world what man has made OF bliss?

As to the style of Dominic Prof. Elisabetta Marino observes, “Far from indulging in the use of sophisticated images and complex rhyming patterns, Dominic has opted for a simple and unpretentious poetic style, which appeals to both the average reader and the expert; indeed, despite the natural elegance of his lines, the message he wishes to convey to his wide and varied readership appears to be his primary concern.” Marino focuses on *Cataracts of Compassion*. And she rightly observes that the waterfalls or the cataracts speak of renewal. Today even childhood being attached to the toys has lost its pristine purity. Do we not come from God with clouds of glory clinging to us? Hence there is the fall from Eden. We are too egoistic to acknowledge Nature as our equal. The separation of man from Nature hastens our fall and sorrow mickle. Marino posits that according to Dominic the only antidote to despair and self-destruction seems to be provided by a renewed sense of spirituality and a desire for moral guidance.

Prof. Kavitha Gopalakrishnan observes that the all-encompassing unconditional sacrificial love – agape is the dominant motif in all of the poems of Dominic. She is hundred percent right. She invokes the post-modern philosopher Levinas in her defence of Dominic’s stance we cannot think of the self unless there is the other. And in ethics the other’s right to exist has primacy over my own primacy epitomized in the ethical edict – You shall not kill. Kavitha quotes Dominic and observes: I cannot find human beings better than other beings or dearest to the Creator.

Dr. Poonam Dwivedi seems to look upon Dominic's poetry steadily and as a whole. She hints at their underlying structure. She states that there are four cords of multicultural symphony i.e., four books authored by the poet namely *Winged Reason; Write Son, Write; Multicultural Symphony* and a *Collection of New Poems*. She gives us an overview of all the four books in a succinct way. Poonam however says smiling on the other side of the face – 'But the poems are too simple to be rated high. Literature has to be truthful (Satyam), in other words realistic as Dominic would have it and PCK Prem endorses, but still two yardsticks to judge literature of excellence require ingredients of (Shivam) i.e. beneficial and (Sundaram). Undoubtedly, it may be beneficial to the contemporary society but it certainly cannot be said to be Beauteous (Sundaram).'' Well, at the outset of her essay Poonam says that the major theme of Dominic's poetry is the eternal relationship between Man, Nature and God. And it is obvious that his hidden meaning is that, beyond all human relations, visible world of senses and the invisible domain of the unmanifest Almighty there seems to be nothing left in the eyes of Dominic. The invisible domain of the unmanifest of the Almighty admits of no difference. So any difference between *satyam*, *shivam* and *sundaram* is true in the contingent only. One who touches upon the invisible domain of the unmanifest surely attains the three at the same time. In fact there is no difference between *satyam*, *sivam* and *sundaram* on the plane of the absolute. Her comments on *Multicultural Symphony* in the essay are time and again. Poetry cannot be higher than that. We must thank Dr Poonam for unveiling such imports of Dominic's poetry. She is a *rasika* or a soul having a priori capabilities to appreciate. With us reader's response or the theory of *rasa* is the last word of aesthetics. Thank you Dr Poonam.

Silviya Florance S. & Dr, (Mrs.) Raichel M. Sylus dwell on Dominic's poetry from the standpoint of eco-criticism. When we say our environment is decadent it means that our environment is not congenial for man to exist. This is because we men are divorced from Nature. Eco-critics seek to create awareness in man as to the importance of Nature. They are keen on establishing a rapport between Man and Nature. Man must know that he is an organic part of Nature and if Nature is destroyed man can't live any more. Silviya and Raichel allude to two waves of eco-criticism. While the first wave celebrates a Nature berating its spoilers the second wave is inclined towards issues of environmental justice. Silviya and Raichel opine that Dominic falls under both the ways. They observe that at the first place Dominic feels blessed to have Nature as a present from God but also grieves thinking about the danger that Nature may encounter. And however much man might excel in art and culture it cannot outdo the sights and sounds of Nature. Both man and Nature are the artworks of God. But Silviya and Raichel observe that where one lives singing and loving the other does not live. Man just exists sweating and moaning. Silviya and Raichel have discovered God with brush in Dominic's gallery of images. The sun, the rose... etc. are painted by his hands for man's delightful livings but man because of his anthropocentric ideas as opposed to bio-centric vision deems himself superior to environment. And Sandeep Kuman points that this is the tragic flaw that might bring about his doom. Silviya and Raichel have analysed the Mango tree with great insight. And indeed we must agree with them: "Dominic as a writer is fighting a battle against injustice done to Nature." Indeed according to them, Dominic belongs to the tribe of Rabindranath Tagore, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy, Ruskin Bond etc.

Dr. Sabita Chakraborty in her inimitable essay gives us a glimpse of the philosophy of Dominic. With Dominic the phenomenal world is an orchestra that consists of the karma of living beings and lifeless objects. God the Father conducts this orchestra but man has no ear for it. He strikes discordant notes amidst the cosmic symphony. And man is thus fore-doomed to destruction. Sabita compares Dominic with Prophet Daniel who reads the writings on the wall. Dominic dwells on the contingent only which are more or less concerned with the follies and foibles of human society. But the imaginative readers never fail to intuit that there is a larger philosophy of life lurking behind the responses of the poet to the contingent. Earlier Poonam Dwivedi observed: "It becomes obvious that his hidden meaning goes beyond the human relations visible world of senses and invisible domain of the unmanifest almighty..." Sabita in her own way has tried to retrieve the philosophy of Dominic

Sheeba Ramadhevan opines: "Going through the poems of K.V. Dominic we would feel that it is true with Kant when he stated that the poet, 'transgressing the limits of experience, attempts with the aid of imagination to body forth the rational ideas to sense with the completeness of which Nature affords no parallel.'" On the surface this comment raises a paradox in the context of Silviya's observation – The natural is bliss. The bees hover over the real flowers not over the artificial ones, but doesn't poetry excel the bounty and gifts of nature in its suggestion of the unmanifest Almighty lurking behind the show of things? This is true as to the works of Dominic. But Dominic's poetry is not burdened with the wealth of philosophy. Sheeba points out that simplicity being the keynote of his writings, it may aptly be said that his creations are beautiful fairies in the attire of simplicity and when these angelic

forms hum, we can hear the harmonious rhythm of poetic elegance at par excellence. Sheeba compares the poetry of Dominic with the outpourings of William Blake.

Kasturi Shivaprasad in his article opines that Dominic is a poet of simple, effective and point blank expression which enables the reader to comprehend his theme. This is a remarkable comment. Roland Barthes in his thesis on Readerly text and Writerly text observes that good poetry or good literature is unlike a soap opera. It is not easily comprehensible like a soap opera. May be such aesthetics might have goaded modern poetry to become obscure. Consequently readership of poetry is decimated all over the world. But Dominic's simplicity of style and diction paves the way to popularise poetry. He does not revel in thoughts that are too deep for people who do not have breathing time being engaged in the rat race. His poems on the surface do not adventure into the realm where thoughts are baffled. He dwells on such things as are treated in everyday newspaper. His poetry dwells on everyday occurrences that we experience on our way to the office or on our way back from the office. But Dominic's poetry is qualitatively different from the reports that we find in newspapers. While journalism is focused on reporting an incident as it is Dominic reports the same only to evoke our sentiments and emotions. Thus his poetry seeks to remind his readers that they are capable of human emotions unlike the so-called scientists. Shivaprasad further points out that the poems of Dominic cascade from his pen to enlighten us through his experience. On a level what is empirical is more valuable than what is theoretical. True but a philosopher should begin with the contingent. His empirical observations goad him to the realm beyond sense perceptions. Or else his poetry empowers us and our senses so that we can perceive things which we are not used to perceive. For example, with Dominic

we hear the groans of the mother earth. Shivaprasad points out that Dominic through his poem "Musing on the Killing of a Tiger" feels as if he were the tiger being killed. Thus Dominic the poet philosopher and guide of our age leads us to a world of perception that is too deep for tears. His empirical observations are not blind to the miracles that baffle reason. Shivaprasad himself notes that Buddha was a miracle to others. But the winged reason of Dominic looks upon this miracle as possible. This justifies the title of one of the books of poems by Dominic which is christened as *Winged Reason*.

We have already inferred from Shivaprasad's article which is focused on Dominic's empirical observations of life, that Dominic is aware of miracle. The persons who act or perceive miracles do not understand that they are miracles. Miracles are thus empirical observations to them. And the greatest of the miracles is compassion. S. Padmanathan (Sopa) in his essay on Dominic dwells on this compassion which permeates through the whole work of Dominic and this compassion reminds us of Lord Buddha. Sopa dwells on the significance of compassion and distinguishes the same from so called love. Because the one word love is too often profaned for us to profane it. And curiously enough while on one level Dominic's poems are love poems on another level they are singularly bereft of love poems as such. Sopa alludes to Dominic's premonitions as to the future of Rani of the circus company and of Devapriya a housemaid and makes us stand before the mysterium tremendum tongue tied. What man has made of man! Sopa observes: "The havoc wreaked by multinational companies on the third world is monstrous. Union Carbide left Bhopal a mini Hiroshima. The poet exposes, with adequate details, how Coca Cola robbed Plachimada in Kerala of precious water by sinking bore wells. The Company made billions as profits while the waste made the

old and the young sick. Paddy fields turned waste lands. Women had to walk kilometres to fetch drinkable water.”

Dr. Sugandha Agarwal observes: “Dominic has a purified heart and soul who feels pity and anger for the irresponsible, selfish and ungrateful children of the new-fangled world who leave their parents in their old age:

Children who know  
 very well how they  
 were loved and reared  
 desert their parents  
 when old and weak  
 Leave them in  
 old age homes,  
 hospitals, jungles  
 buses and trains  
 Compassion is alien

One wonders how Dominic’s heart has been purified. Has it been through Dominic’s journey across the world or the Purgatorio? Or has it been there through his invocation of Buddha? Be that as it may, Sugandha after perusing the poems of Dominic feels that Dominic has a pure heart. As we know Dominic pins his faith on karma. And the lines quoted from Dominic seem to suggest ironically indeed that the parents who are left in old-age homes, hospitals and jungles by their children reap their karma only. And elsewhere Dominic has warned bad parenting. Alice visited wonderland. We are as it were in blunder land. Look at the Indian widow. Eagles fly over her wherever she goes. When she craves for love and sympathy the society rends her heart with shooting arrows of repulsive words. It is a queer world where God proposes but man disposes. Nature’s dense forest are swept away to create concrete buildings and townships. Indeed antithesis the rhetoric lurks as a building

material of Dominic's poetry. And we readers with Dominic exclaim:

Alas I have to row all alone now  
And sea has become more violent  
No glimpse of any terminus now  
With none to help from both our families

Both our families might also imply the family made of man and the family which is Nature. Nature complains:

Mind you, this world is not your grandpa's

Dominic's English is characteristically Indian English with the way the Indians speak. When Dominic says:

Seventy percent of Indians in villages  
Seventy five percent of rural India...

he not only forges poetry with the stuff of statistics; our conversation at tea tables and coffee shops metamorphose into poetry in Dominic's poetic realm.

The present author happens to be a Brahmin by birth. His parents did believe in the caste system in the orthodox way. When his mother was away at hospital she needed blood for the operation of her tumour in the uterus. And did she know who gave her blood? To which caste the donor belonged? And Dominic observes:

When you need urgent blood for your ailing body  
your irrational discrimination disappears

Dominic cries: "I long to go backward to my childhood." This reminds us of Vaughan. Should time be retrograde rushing back to the golden age? Wordsworth lamented in his 'Ode on Intimations' that the glory and the visionary gleam of childhood have vanished. Dominic laments: "Alas! Gone are those golden

days of my life”. And surely man himself is to blame for this. And hence the Apostrophe, “Cruelty thy name is man”.

Dr. Y. Vidya observes that there are some existential strains in K. V. Dominic’s poetry. Existentialism is based on man’s feeling and experience and flout all system based on reason and abstraction. Vidya feels that there is a feeling in Dominic’s poetry of sharing attitudes and experiences. Dominic tells us:

When grief enters  
Talk to a tree  
You will be solaced

Dr. Vidya observes that Dominic’s poetry sometimes moves on the ethical level. Yes metaphysics becomes pointless without ethics. Unless you cultivate goodness in human relations and the world; you cannot excelsior into the blue deep of metaphysics. And Dominic’s poetical works are built with the bricks of irony raised on the principles of antithesis. Dr. Vidya observes that Dominic’s poetry has two kinds of irony. “One closely allied to satire, where he stands at a distance from the object looked at, the other closely allied to compassion, where he examines the experience as if from within”. Vidya further observes that “the changing reality of love and the human relationship on the one hand, of the unchanging contours of Indian landscape on the other, are as it were the spirits mundi from where he draws all his images”.

Dominic treats the landscape and its forms in various ways exploring values. Vidya posits that “it is apparent that there is a juxtaposition of the two worlds of images in the poetic corpus of K.V. Dominic. At one extreme, we find the dark world and the other there is the resplendent Nature symbolic of essential vigour, vitality and innocence. Indeed, these are the obsessive images in the poetry of K. V. Dominic. These two sets of

images, representing two sets of values in contradiction to each other, are the basic constituents of the poet's search for meaning in life and poetry. In fact, they achieve the widest possible connotations and symbolic status in the poetry of K. V. Dominic." Thus Vidya teaches us how the trope called antithesis could generate multiple variegated meanings in Dominic's poetry

In our next essay the eminent poet and critic Dr D C Chambial telescopes the whole poetical work of Dr K V Dominic and retells the same in the form of a narrative. Here the poet dons the shape of a hawk and surveys the society which is full of contrasts. A mother beats her obese boy for he must eat more. In a nearby hut a famished child cries for crumbs. Elsewhere there is a wedding feast. Outside two ragged girls struggle with dogs in the garbage bin. From the skyey height the hawk finds men in a long queue looking like ants in a queue before a wine shop and women in a long queue waiting for their turn for rations. Dr Chambial observes that while male folks' concern is limited to their enjoyment of themselves with wine the women sacrifice their comforts for the sake of their homes and families. Thus Chambial dwells on human sufferings seen through the eyes of Dominic. Indian philosophy posits that the world teems with sorrow mickle. Neither the poor are happy nor the rich. Somewhere poor people wait and wait for hours together for water. Elsewhere rich people live in luxurious buildings in their old age and their wards are gone to foreign lands.

Dominic is good story teller in verse. Chambial recounts Anand's lot and illustrates Dominic's storytelling power. There Anand laments:

I have to sleep in their hut  
Eat dry bed which I hate ....

Chambial posits that these lines reveal the abject condition in which such children live. Though this may not be a real story yet it is a simulation of the lives of a number of children lifted by these gangs and forced into begging. Dr Chambial in this way notes the themes such as, 1 human sufferings, 2 dignity of labour, 3 economic disparity, 4 ecology and gifts of Nature, 5 women, 6 workers, 7 social evils, 8 animals and birds, 9 politics and politicians, 10 religious discrimination, 11 festivals and social harmony. These themes work together or separately to forge the poetic works of Dominic. Thank you, Dr Chambial for summing up the major themes of Dominic's poems.

Dr Laxmi R Chaugan focuses on Dominic's "Write My Son, Write". In fact this is the poem that functions as the central thesis of Dominic. The other poems are epiphenomenon of the same. So it seems to the present editor. By the by the present editor was overwhelmed with "Write My Son, Write" and tried his hand in dwelling on this long poem. Dr Laxmi, however, seems to excel my efforts. She appreciates the poem on different counts. Laxmi deems this poem as Dominic's masterpiece. Laxmi feels that Dominic sees beauty in the creation of God and measures everything as bigger than himself. This is itself an acceptance of God as present everywhere and present in everything. But everyone does not see the world like that. Laxmi observes: "The biggest difference lies here – one who could see the difference and acknowledge it and the other who doesn't even observe it. The recognition of life is the basic, but the curiosity with which the question for life comes is not small. This in fact is the reflection of spirituality that we see amongst very few of our time, K V Dominic being one of those." It seems that when we are aware of our greed and anger and the like we try to get rid of them and grow spiritually. Laxmi observes that one elevates and gains heights of spirituality when

he/she starts thinking of prevalent problem. In other words Dominic's perception of social evils is also a stepping stone for his spiritual elevation. Just as Oedipus unknowingly acted against the natural law and brought about natural calamity in his kingdom so, as Laxmi opines, to the natural calamities and disasters that occur on the face of the earth today is the result of untamed human greed. Laxmi sees into Dominic's philosophy when she says that every thought we think about, according to Dominic, has an effect on everything around us. Thus blow by blow, Laxmi's essay makes us think about Dominic's poetry and the world in a fresh way. She finds parallels between Dominic and Emerson as well as between Dominic and Eliot. Hers is a very perceptive essay. The readers will certainly profit by it.

The learned article of Parthajit Ghosh is sure to draw the attention of the readers. He observes that Dominic's poems are critiques of human follies wherein he philosophises about the multicultural harmony among all the living and the non-living in the universe. This multiculturalism of Dominic reminds Parthajit of the modern Hindi poet Munna Dhiman. Parthajit quotes Dominic:

Let there be no India Pakistan or China  
 .....  
 in multicultural world.  
 But it is a pity that  
 We do use our reasoning power  
 not to find harmony  
 We take thrill in discordant notes  
 Love split atoms and destroy others

Parthajit puts forward many emergent points in Dominic's poetry that otherwise we would fail to notice.

Dr Pamela Jeyaraju points out that reflections on life have become a major source of Dominic's poetry. Dr Alexander Raju seems to explicate Pamela's thesis when he says that Dominic's poems are the Songs of Experience.

Fr. Varghese Paul is a venerable personality with love for all things great and small. Our deepest regards to him. He reads Christianity in Dominic's poems. Just as Jesus showed up at the age of thirty with clouds of heavenly glory so is Dominic a late bloomer in the realm of poetry. Evangelist Mathew has summarised Jesus' life and mission saying, "Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom, and healing people who had all kinds of disease and sicknesses." Fr. Varghese observes that in the self-same way Dominic has left a stamp on every possible theme of life with the teachings of Jesus. What were the teachings of Jesus? According to Fr. Varghese Jesus gave the sum and substance of his life and message in two commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: "Love your neighbour as you love yourself." (Mathew 22: 37-39). Nietzsche thundered God is dead. Humanism replaced God. And Fr. Varghese posits that what is genuinely humanist is very much Christian and vice versa. True. There was no greater humanist than Christ himself whose life and message of good news were expressed both in words and in concrete action. Now one wonders whence the humanism of Jesus springs. Jesus knew God the Father who loves, cares for all his children animate or inanimate. And this is what Dominic underlines in his poetry. With Fr. Varghese Dominic has many poems expressing his Christian faith and Jesus' Kingdom, values of love and service, justice and equality, compassion and kindness. And think of

Dominic describing the deforestation. Tree after tree are being uprooted just as one's hair after another hair are uprooted. Does it not allude to Samson? Once the forests resurrect the reign of the infidels who are materialistic charged with the cafeteria attitude of service for self are sure to be destroyed. We might read in Dominic's imagery Delilah the personification of greed for material wealth and sensual pleasure. Dominic's poetry is littered with personalities that are up in arms against the charms of *la belle dam sans merci*. They are the incarnations of Christ. Or in other words Christ is their archetype. Did not St. Paul address the entire church in Philippi and say, "To you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake." Christ here stands for compassion boundless. But Christ, the cataract of compassion, the lamb could roar as a tiger burning bright. Did he not thunder upon the greedy shopkeepers at the fair of Jerusalem? We find this Christ image in Dominic when he becomes a vulture to carry Bush in his claws and to put him in a prison made of bones. It is this spirit of revolution in a Christian that sometimes might class him with the revolutionaries such as Marxists. Who could be more declassed than Christ? Even a sparrow has a nest to hide its head. But Christ had no home on earth. And who could be a greater follower of *Advaitavada* than a Christian that preaches that Christ is Emmanuel. God is in everything in every being and in every thought. The Bible says: As you sow so you reap. And no wonder Dominic a Christian is more of a Hindu pinning his faith on karma. Dominic is a Trinitarian on one level and a Unitarian on another level. Dominic's poetry is on three themes in outline. They are Man, Nature and God. Dominic pins his faith, on the three *gunas* in *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika*. When he dwells on the blessed voyage *rajasika* life philosophy is juxtaposed with the *sattvika* philosophy of life. The nasty politicians stand for *tamasika* attitude to life. The approach of

science is quantitative. The approach of Hinduism is qualitative. The *sattvaguna* will be entertained in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus Dominic's poetry could be the offshoot of the Gita for the Hindus and it is the Bible at the core for the Christians and Communist manifesto at heart for the Marxists. Fr. Varghese observes that Dominic's poetry has appeal to people beyond India, our country. It has an appeal to readers all over the globe. Fr. Varghese further adds K. V. Dominic's verses prove what Voltaire said: "One merit of poetry few persons will deny, it says more and in few words".

The scholarly review of Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya on Dominic by Anisha Ghosh has added fresh meaning to the poems of Dominic. Anisha observes that there is always something new to be discovered in Dominic's poetry. My salutes to Anisha what Anisha says about Dominic could be proved from the reviews of Dominic's books reviewed by Dr. Laxmi Chaugan as well as by Dr Sangeeta Mahesh.

Though Dominic's poetry seems to take its sap from without, often from the events reported in journals Nandita Bhattacharya shows where Dominic's poetry differs from journalism. She quotes from Dominic and asserts: "Farming noblest of all callings / Most terrestrial and natural". *Om Tat Sat!*

Before winding up my long preface let me express my deep gratitude to esteemed Shri Sudarshan Kcherry, publisher of the world renowned publishing house Authorspress, New Delhi. I am also grateful to Prof. T. V. Reddy for his superb foreword. My sincere thanks go to each and every contributor of this book who made it a reality. I wish all readers an enlightening feast to their minds!

**Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya**



# RESEARCH PAPERS



## Nature in the Poetry of K. V. Dominic

Biswanath Kundu

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Dominic is a votary of Nature. With him Nature is just as it was with Wordsworth and Shelley. Dominic states in the poem “Lesson from Fruit Plants”:

Nature is the best teacher  
Modest and humble man  
learns eternal truths from it  
*(Cataracts of Compassion 47)*

Dominic dwells on the actions of Nature in the same poem:

sweet smelling petals  
make plants most pretty  
and attract variety of flies  
and even human beings  
But after a few days  
with no reluctance but joy  
they shed these beauties  
to give birth to fruits:  
the ultimate fulfilment  
of their simple lives  
*(Cataracts of Compassion 47)*

But man ignores the truth how Nature has been essential for the survival of the creation and how it is essential for human happiness and growth. It is a pity that man prides in destroying

Nature that surrounds him. The poet writes in “No Balm Can Cure Nature’s Wounds”:

Monsoon season God’s manna  
.....  
Millennium old regular monsoon  
that never betrayed farmers’ dreams  
force them for suicides day after day  
Greedy money minded mafias—  
land, forest, sand, quarry  
.....  
topple age-old climatic seasons  
Natural dense forests are swept away  
to create concrete buildings and townships  
How can there be any repair?  
No balm can cure Nature’s wounds.

*(Cataracts of Compassion 52)*

The way natural forest is destroyed, results in the qualitative changes of the earth. Dominic speaks of it in “Haves and Have-nots”:

Abundant Nature  
feeds plants and animals,  
Greedy selfish man disrupts  
Mother Nature’s feeding;  
*(Winged Reason 36)*

Let us read the poem titled ‘I Am Just a Mango Tree’ to understand the import and function of Nature:

I am just a Mango Tree;  
.....  
I shelter my student-friends  
waiting for the buses.  
The Sun can’t wither them,  
nor Rain wets them.  
.....  
I grow and bear fruits for others.  
When I blossom, flies kiss me.

My branches are the beds for birds;  
cuckoos, crows and mynahs come;  
when my fruits are ripe, a feast to them.  
Their chirps and songs lull me often;

.....  
I drop mellow yellow fruits  
to my beggar friend who sleeps beneath.  
(*Winged Reason* 40-41)

The poem dwells on how a tree serves the ends of the environment. It exclaims:

My God, how happy I feel –  
The fruit of service!  
(*Winged Reason* 41)

But men are keen on felling the mango tree for the sake of development. The mango tree exclaims:

Haven't I the right to live?  
God, why is your Man so selfish and cruel?  
Did you create him,  
to disturb this earth's balance?  
(*Winged Reason* 41)

Dominic points out that though Nature ceaselessly toils for serving others it is full of songs and mirth. He sings in “Cuckoo Singing”:

Cuckoos' songs echo:  
waking call  
for dreaming day.  
Sweetest song in Nature;  
sweeter than any  
man-made music;  
.....  
Yes, cuckoo lives  
singing and loving,  
while man exists  
sweating and moaning.

(*K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide* 14)

Dominic thus contrasts the merry Nature with man who is self seeking and materialistic.

Anthropocentric thoughts need to be edited. Weightage should be given to other schools too who have a significant say in the construction of the fabrics of the society. It is imperative that humans by virtue of their reasoning power can easily identify the superfluous from the essentials. But it is again equally important to note that though other animals are devoid of this trait of reasoning, they can be elevated to super conscious state if treated and greeted enthusiastically and sincerely. Openness of mind is a must to erase the dust of confusion or to strike at objects to extract the best from them. Many a time, we miss the rhythm of life due to our obsession for materialistic excellence. The best and most of our potentialities can be tapped fruitfully if and only if we subscribe to the notion of harmonious coexistence of all the living beings. A little introspection is needed to reach the goal of peace and prosperity reared in our heart. Anthropocentric thought is thus under scanner for the wellbeing of the society which consists of both men and environment. Dominic observes in his masterpiece poem "Write My Son, Write":

Living beings and  
 lifeless objects  
 all inter-related.  
 .....  
 snakes, worms,  
 pests, mosquitoes,  
 ants, lice, beetles,  
 centipede, millipede,  
 cockroach, spider –  
 all for me, good  
 and beautiful;  
 but for you,  
 bad and ugly.

Your selfish mind  
tries to ignore  
benefits rendered  
by these housemates.

(*Write, Son, Write* 25-26)

Dominic has rightly observed that like all human beings animals also have a right to live. In his book, *Cataracts of Compassion*, he has shown how stray dogs are forced to attack human beings on being snatched their share to the dustbin meat. He laments the fate of the innocent animals that are deprived of their right to wander in the forests with ease of prey. Dominic's love for Nature is beautifully recorded in his poem "I Can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth". Nature poetry i.e., poetry on Nature or poems written on inspiration from Nature are the thrust area of his poetic composition. Dominic's sensitive mind clearly draws bitter experiences in detailing the wounds on the benign Nature caused by man. Dominic writes:

I can hear the groan of mother earth  
.....  
I can hear her shriek for help  
when they cut each her vein  
and drain all brooks and rivers  
Can't you hear your mother's wail  
when they pluck her hair after hair  
felling trees and plants which protect them?  
I can hear the scream of elephants, tigers,  
Boars, snakes and all wild animals  
when they drive them from their homes  
and starve to death by burning forests  
I can hear the death cry of bird after bird  
when they cut their feeding trees  
to make their selfish life more luxurious

(*Cataracts of Compassion* 41)

An interconnection between Nature and humankind, the distinctive feature of Nature poems or green poetry is found in

abundance by creative writers in all ages. Green Nature or rural sublimity has always been the place of wandering of the poets. In modern Indo-English poetry Dominic has also aptly employed his zeal to pinpoint the beauty and purity of Nature. The universal truth of interdependence of man and Nature has been nicely explained in many poems of Dominic, especially in 'Write My Son, Write'. But the poet laments in the poem "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam":

Laws of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam  
 eternal laws of the planet  
 Meant for humans and nonhumans  
 But rational human beings never care

(K. V. Dominic *Essential Readings and Study Guide* 244)

It is not out of place to mention here how an Indo-English poet like Dominic who started writing poetry at the ripe age of 48, accommodated in his writings tone and tenor of the top Nature poets already noted above, as evidenced from the following:

Kalidasa, the prince in Sanskrit Literature, portrays in his works in a most appreciating manner the universal relationship between Nature and Human being with a penchant for examining the concepts of Environmental Awareness. *Meghdoot* or *Cloud Messenger* is an instance.

Wordsworth offered not just a beautiful picture of nature but also illustrated the power of Nature to rejuvenate the spirit of man: "My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky."

Dominic observes through haiku:  
 The Sun kisses  
 The eye opens  
 Lotus blooms

("Nature's Bounties," *Winged Reason* 49)

Coleridge in the context of a narrative depicting a sea voyage observes during a particular situation: "Water water everywhere but not a drop to drink." Dominic also echoes a

similar thought on watching the degradation of the environment in the poem “Water, Water, Everywhere... ”:

Water, the source of life;  
Omnipresent and abundant  
like its parent oxygen.  
Free and ‘insignificant’  
for millions;  
going to be more precious  
than gold and diamond.

(*K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide* 133)

After going through the above poem of Dominic, readers are reminded instant of Shelley’s “Cloud” and “Ode to the West Wind”.

How do we treat Nature? Rather has Nature anything to tell us men? Dominic’s thoughts on spirituality centering on Nature can be traced from the following warning to man in the poem “A Sheep’s Wail”:

superior you boast  
but inferior you become  
to the microbes that kill you”

(*K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide* 8)

Rabindranath Tagore, one of the best Nature poets of India has rightly observed:

What is beautiful is beneficent:  
O goddess Nature, in your beauteous world  
No harm can ever happen.

Obviously, the beauty that Tagore dwells on is not physical beauty. It’s a pride to every Indian that amongst the contemporary Indo-English poets, Dominic seems to explicate the notion of beauty as posited by Tagore. He writes in the poem “Beauty”:

Only spiritual beauty gives eternal joy.  
My dear lass, be like the sun,  
brightening this dark world with your inner beauty.

(K. V. Dominic *Essential Readings and Study Guide* 12)

To be brief every poem penned by Dominic is a gem and his contribution to English literature has been acclaimed worldwide. And rightly he has been put at par with famous Nature poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Robert Frost and the like of the West and Kalidasa, Rabindranath Tagore, Jibananda Das and others of India.

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**K. V. Dominic's Poetry –  
A Quest for Social Reform**

**Dr. M. K. Chand Raj**

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Indian English literature has acquired an identity and status of its own comparable to the writings in American, African and Australian English. Indians' writing in English is often referred to as Indo-Anglican literature. It represents the plurality, complexities and multicultural ethos of Indian society before the literary enthusiasts spread across the world. Along with literatures of prominent Indian languages, Indian English writing too enjoys a pre-eminent position in the Indian literary world. Indian English writers are of two types – those residing in India and those settled abroad. While the former draw inspiration from the diversities of Indian society, the latter make a beautiful blend of Indian and foreign cultures.

AK Ramanujan, Mamta Kalia, Kamala Das, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Nissim Ezekiel, Mul Raj Anand, RK Narayan, Kushwant Singh, Shobha De, Sarojini Naidu, V S Naipaul, Salman Rushdie etc. are some of the prominent names among the longlist of Indo-Anglican writers. Henry Derozio's collection of poems published in 1827 inaugurated the era of Indian English poetry in India. It established a firm base when Nissim Ezekiel published his collection of poems *A Time to Change*. In between these two poets we have to mention some

writers like Toru Dutt, Kashi Prasad Ghosh, Arabindo, Hareendra Nath Chathopadhyaya, Man Mohan Ghosh and Sarojini Naidu. However Toru Dutt, Arabindo and Sarojini Naidu were leading lights in Indian English poetry. In 1958 Lead University constituted Common Wealth Literary Chair and Indian English Literature was included in its syllabus. Consequently, Indian English writing acquired a special status in world literature. Gradually it gained popularity and now this branch of literature is well established and accepted across the world.

Dr. K. V. Dominic is a distinguished Indian English poet, critic and short story writer. Poetry is not a romantic outburst for K. V. Dominic. Human predicament inspires him to write verse. The bitterness of the present day society haunts the poet and consequently his poems represent suffering masses and oppressed sections of the society. He criticises the decadence of the society around him. He always keeps a sense of irony, sarcasm and wit. He wages a war against all kinds of exploitation – be it of women, children, nature, or those living in the fringes of society. Social disorder and disharmony provoke him to write poetry. His deepest concern is about the common man; the poorest of the poor. The poet harbours the fond hope of eradicating the poverty and sufferings of the common man. He is dead against social injustice, gender bias and corruption prevailing in the society.

Dominic's views are out and out left oriented. 'Long Live E. K. Nayanar' is an elegy written on the leader of the masses, E. K. Nayanar. When the communist leader died the people were engulfed in grief. They couldn't believe that their dearest C.M. was no more. A large gathering of wailing masses followed Nayanar's last journey testifying to his immense popularity. The

poet too joined them. The people's adoration for the leader is vividly brought out in the following lines:

Your absence from amidst us  
shows your presence among the stars.  
You are our polestar  
who saves us from the Darkness.

(“Long Live E. K. Nayanar,” *Winged Reason*)

The widening gap between the rich and the poor pains the poet's heart. He can't reconcile to the irrefutable fact that a vast majority of people are left without food, cloth and shelter. He rightly feels that this injustice is man-made. The affluent class amasses more and more wealth at the expense of the poor. Capitalism is the villain of the peace for this gross imbalance in society. Socialism is looked down upon by the powers that are interested only in projecting inflated figures of GDP growth, without caring for the upliftment of the marginalised and the poor. This sorry state of affairs has been poignantly expressed thus:

Thousands of children  
are famished  
in our country  
and other countries  
day after day.  
Leftovers of the  
ten percent Haves  
can sustain  
ninety percent Havenots  
and make this hellish world  
a blissful heaven.

(“Hungry Mouths,” *Multicultural Symphony*)

The poet is worried over fake development propaganda of the rulers in India. The corporates and the government are hand in glove to squeeze the economically weaker section of the society. Thousands are made homeless in the name of

development of the nation. Those who dissent will be dubbed as anti-social/anti-national/Naxal! The poet's scathing criticism of this scenario finds expression in 'India, Number One':

India is growing,  
True, growth is there  
in number of multimillionaires  
who are even less than two percent  
(“India, Number One,” *Multicultural Symphony*)

Equality in India remains a myth as is seen in the life of the marginalised people.

The poet laments: “where is liberty, equality, fraternity... the watchwords of democracy!”

India's richest one percent holds  
fifty eight percent of country's total wealth  
Fifty seven billionaires in India  
keep equal wealth of the entire villagers  
Wherein lies the so called equality?  
Yet India is largest democracy in the world!  
(“Equality in India,” *Cataracts of Compassion*)

The poet is a pacifist. The world needs to be made free from war mongers, he hopes. But in reality the world order is in chaos. America invaded Iraq ignoring the requests from the pacifists all over the world. Even the UN intervention in this regard had not been accepted by the Bush administration in the USA. Consequently, millions of innocent people including children were killed. Iraq has the cultural history of more than five thousand years. Its heritage sites, monuments etc. were vandalised and destroyed by the allied forces without an iota of mercy! Dominic joins the long list of humanists from across the globe who expressed their deep indignation and anger over this cruelty. He gives vent to his ire thus:

I wish I had the claws of a vulture  
to fetch the skeletons from Iraq

and build a bone-place  
to imprison Bush in it.

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

Communalism is a great menace in the society. In Keralam, the native State of the poet, communal violence seldom takes place. But communal forces are lurking around here. Secular and democratic forces are very vigilant in order to prevent the occurrence of any untoward incident in the name of caste, creed and religion. In spite of this secular shield, communal as well as superstitious elements do prevail in the State. The poet is very much aware of these negative forces trying to upset the cultural harmony of Keralam. Cent percent literacy and educational achievements fail before blind belief. The poet seeks to highlight this negativity as follows:

Education makes one cultured and civilised  
teaches one noble values and principles  
Alas high rate of literacy  
doesn't yield fruit to my fellowmen  
They are puppets in the hands of  
religious and political mafias  
Become preys to superstitions,  
offshoots of religious blind faith  
Millions are spent for  
senseless rituals and ceremonies.

(“Multicultural Kerala,” *Multicultural Symphony*)

In a patriarchal society women are considered as second class citizens. They have no equal right as their male counterparts. The ‘She’ is supposed to be dependent on the ‘He’ who governs the family. Her voice is suppressed and her human rights are violated often. The female cannot choose her partner. She is considered inferior to the male member of the family. Her brother's will is more important than that of her. This is the real picture of an average Indian family. The poet clearly illustrates this predicament of women:

Dear my fellow beings  
there's no discrimination  
of male or female in animal world  
But look at the plight of female  
in human world  
Her birth is ill omen  
Millions are butchered  
before they are born  
Parents receive her  
as burden to family

(“Multicultural Harmony,” *Multicultural Symphony*)

This kind of human rights' violation is taking place in our country in spite of women's lib movements. Gender equality prevails even in the animal kingdom! It is a pity that human beings have to learn this from the animals that are not endowed with faculty of thinking! Indian patriarchy is again subjected to sharp criticism in the poem, “I am an Indian Young Widow”:

Patriarchy doesn't allow her to survive  
Eagles fly over her wherever she goes  
When she craves for love and sympathy  
society rends her bleeding heart  
shooting arrows of repulsive words

(“I am an Indian Young Widow,” *Cataracts of Compassion*)

Dominic writes on a wide range of subjects. His poems address the concrete, live issues that affect the entire humanity, and he keeps a safe distance from unintelligible abstractions that make poetry obscure. An amazing variety of subjects find poetic expression in his verses, such as environmental degradation, craze for war, gender equality, pacifism, socialism, child labour, casteism, superstitions, cruelty to animals and what not. Multicultural beauty of the world we live in gets unfolded in his poems. I think poetry writing is a democratic activity for Dominic. It reflects the plurality of the Indian society. The poet is a true dissenter who challenges the decadent system of the

society, which may not be music to many ears. He is a one man army that wages a relentless battle against the evil forces hindering humanity's onward march to a better social order. I am not sure, in which category – romantic, modern, postmodern – his poetry can be bracketed. But I am sure, Dominic's poetry is undoubtedly progressive to the hilt.

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## **A Poet, Compassionate and Sensitive: An Evaluation of K. V. Dominic's Poetry**

**Dr. Poonam Nigam Sahay**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The entire world of K V Dominic revolves around “compassion” – a virtue so rare in today’s world. One can almost feel a spiritual humanism enveloping all his work, be it his poetry or prose. He truly advocates the mission of devoted service to humanity. He descends from the highest stratum of society to the lowest stratum of outcasts to feel the pangs and pain of the downtrodden. He expresses the universal truth of human destiny with his poetic force, employing appropriate words and images to convey his feelings poignantly and precisely. Almost 10 years ago, in his article entitled “The Compassionate Instinct” Greater Good Science Centre co-founder Dacher Keltner investigated regarding this science of human goodness and came to a conclusion that compassion is “an evolved part of human nature, rooted in our brain and biology” (Keltner). His forays into neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, behavioural health, developmental science and other disciplines convinced him further regarding his earlier premise.

Before delving into Dominic’s poetry, we must understand the nature of compassion, what it is and how different is it from

empathy or altruism, with which it is always confused. “Empathy is the ability to share someone else’s feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person’s situation,” says the Cambridge Dictionary. It is almost in a sense, an automatic mirroring of another’s emotion. Altruism, on the other hand, is an act that benefits someone else. The act may or may not be accompanied by empathy or compassion. A good example of it may be making a donation for tax purposes. However, compassion triggers an emotional response within our body and does have a desire to help overcome that suffering. This is exactly what we find in his poetry predominantly.

K V Dominic writes simply, using everyday language and imagery:

But you taught us to show  
equal care and compassion  
to all creatures of this world

.....

Hence enlighten the world Lord Buddha  
And fill this planet with peace and happiness

(“Enlighten Us Lord Buddha” 23)

The poem exhibits a touching simplicity, very direct in its address, imploring Lord Buddha to fill this planet with peace and happiness with the sense of an innate urgency required.

This poem is the first one of the thirty-four poems in his latest and sixth collection of poems entitled *Cataracts of Compassion*. The entire collection contains poems which have unusual themes, in the sense that they are not the usual, run of the mill poems; rather, they happen to be woven around socially conscious themes. For instance, witness these lines:

Millions of starving people – children, women  
old stretch their hands with begging bowls,

for remnants of other people's food

.....

How can the rich and rich countries  
waste the excess food  
when their wretched siblings  
cry for just a meal a day?

(“African Poverty” 26)

The poem “African Poverty” talks about the abject condition of the inhabitants of South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria. How many poets have ventured on this subject till date, is the burning question.

Yet another poem “From Lamb to Wolf” talks about the negativity which compels even well-bred, educated citizens to become terrorists:

Was a wonder to teachers who foresaw him as scientist  
Won M Tech with first rank from IIT

.....

And he would never come back home  
Learnt that he was enchanted by terrorists

(“From Lamb to Wolf” 36)

The poem ends with lines which pose soul-searing questions:

Isn't service to man service to God?

.....

How can God, epitome of love, be pleased  
by violence and bloodshed in His name?

Another unique poem in this collection “Bapooty's Onam Feast to Stray Animals” depicts the feast given by Bapooty, a taxi-driver, who loves to feed the stray dogs and cats. There are as many as “thirty cats” and “ten” dogs, who enjoy the sumptuous Onam meal given by Bapooty. He is so generous that he adds meat and chicken for their satisfaction too. The poet rightly claims that he is a role model to other human

beings, as they are solely concerned about themselves and their materialistic needs. No one has even an iota of sympathy for these miserable creatures. Man is not alone on this planet but rather at the apex of the total flora and fauna existing here. He must take care of other beings too. It has been stressed upon in various religions too to be empathetic to the surroundings. If not shouldering the entire responsibility, at least we can do something to alleviate the suffering of our fellow beings as well as creatures of the lower order. This in turn invokes blessings. We are fortunate to be “humans” in this birth and hence, we must look around and care for others, who are not fortunate in this life, as us. Hence, this poem is quite visionary in its approach.

In another brilliant collection of poems, *Write Son, Write*, Kumaran says that “the poet considers the world as a sanctuary and brings out the connection between human beings and other beings.” How this can happen is the question that arises prominently. Kumaran writes that the poet feels that this is possible only by the realisation of divinity. In fact, writing itself is a divine inspiration:

I am the ball  
of your pen;  
I am the ink  
That flows  
on the paper.  
Write, my son, write,  
Write till  
I say stop.

(Write Son, *Write* 21)

Thus, we again find the “interrelatedness of things” focused upon, as we encountered in the *Cataracts of Compassion*. There is also a balance and order to be looked for. Apropos Kumaran, “Even the Supreme Being is worried about man’s

failure to move along with the rhythm of the Universe, which the nature observes?":

It grieves me that  
your species seldom  
senses my rhythm.  
Plants and animals  
dance to my number.

*(Write Son, Write 22)*

There is an innate concern in Dominic about the entire universe. It is not just the humans alone. This is almost akin to Spiritual Humanism - like a karmic force determining man's path to the realisation of his humanity. This is not to be mistaken for spirituality at all.

We almost find the poet here crossing conventional boundaries to include all the imaginable strata in his poetic universe unite in suffering with not only human beings but also the entire flora and the fauna thus recognising the Divine Spirit in every particle of this Universe. This indeed then is Compassion in its highest form.

Says Parthajit Ghosh, in his insightful article on Domini's Poetry, entitled "Multicultural Ideologies in the Select Poems of K. V, Dominic: A Rendition of Poetic Insight": "Dominic's poems are the critiques of human follies, wherein he philosophizes about the multicultural harmony among all the livings and non-livings in the universe." He has mused upon this earlier:

There is rhythm  
and harmony  
in every molecule;  
every atom,  
every movement.

*(Write Son, Write 23)*

This fact is stressed upon innumerable times, in his entire poetry. The note of discord is only because of human beings. It is rather hinted, time and again that they are responsible for all kinds of imbalances. Dominic says that we need to learn the need of multicultural existence “a grand concert composed by the Sole Spirit” where inanimate beings know how to flow with the system. It is unfortunately, “the mortal man” who brings in discordant notes, spoiling “this perfect symphony”:

We take thrill in discordant notes  
Love to split atoms and destroy others

*(Multicultural Symphony 16)*

With that note, we need to reflect upon Dominic’s reflections on his country, India, whom he holds sacred in his universe. India, a land of diversity is nevertheless united in many ways. The country has a number of languages, cultures, festivals, food, rituals, music, flora and fauna but underneath is always a current of oneness. However, increasingly human beings are making this beautiful country a wasteland in terms of their abominable behaviour. Says he:

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

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

He voices his sentiments over Kerala’s present vulnerable plight as well. According to him, the land has a great potential in terms of its beauty and weather but the people are being misled in the name of religion and politics – two factors, which are playing upon the people’s feelings, leading them to disaster. Thus, he opines in his poem “Multicultural Kerala”:

They are puppets in the hands of  
religious and political mafias.  
Become preys to superstitions,  
offshoots of religious blind faith.

(*Multicultural Symphony* 29)

We find a very strong voice of the poet, condemning all sorts of nefarious behaviour, whether individually or socially; he wants total harmony and peace in this world, with compassion for each other, whether human beings or nations or communities or religions. The human beings should establish a meaningful and happy relation with all the other inanimate beings too. He does not approve of any kind of religious, political or social barrier, for in another of his poems, he speaks clearly regarding these:

that religions give no solace and hope  
to the miserable multitudes

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

The poet then is vociferously trying to claim that manmade barriers are useless. Man should follow Nature's system and cycle to maintain peace and order, otherwise there will be disaster. Human intervention in this essential manner is strictly to be avoided as it is the irrational action of human beings that creates the disorder everywhere.

Man, can't you hear those tremors of curses  
hurled on you by endangered animals, birds and plants?  
Man, I can hear mother earth cursing you  
as Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna

(“I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth”, *Cataracts of Compassion*  
41)

With this, we also find an overwhelming ecoconsciousness within the poetry of Dominic. This is but natural as compassion will lead to a respect for each other, whether animate or

inanimate. It is essential first that the human beings to maintain their dignity as well as of the others in the entire system.

The poet repeatedly highlights the fact that human beings need not prey upon the lower order beings as there is sufficient food for all on this earth. Right to food does not mean that they have a licence to wipe out all other life on the planet for their selfish requirements, maybe, even pleasure.

The universe bears  
sufficient food  
for human beings.  
All other beings  
seek their food.  
I haven't given  
man licence  
to kill other beings

*(Write Son, Write 35)*

We are touched to the core by the sigh of the mango tree, which is compelled to question God about his creation:

God why is your Man so selfish and cruel?  
Did you create him  
to disturb this earth's balance?  
This planet would be a paradise  
if you kindly withdraw him.

*("I am just a Mango Tree", Winged Reason 41)*

In yet another of his poems, Dominic writes about problems faced by elephants:

Why do you drive us back  
to forest? Elephants wail  
How can we survive  
without food and water?  
Pastures and thickets are burnt  
Neither is there any water  
Our habitats are destroyed.

*("Wails of Mosquitoes and Elephants", Cataracts of Compassion 65)*

The cry for compassion becomes louder and more urgent in poems like "I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth":

I can hear the scream of elephants, tiger,  
Boars, snakes and all wild animals  
when they drive them from their homes  
and starve to death by burning forests  
(“I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth”, *Cataracts of Compassion*  
41)

Hear the shocked voice of the poet when he questions thus:

Why was the tiger so brutally killed?  
Famished in forest what else could it do?  
Has it any division like forest or village?  
Hasn't it right to live as human beings?  
(“Musings on the Killing of a Tiger”, *Cataracts of Compassion* 51)

The poet seethes in anger at the devious machinations of the human beings, whom he holds responsible for all chaos and imbalance in this world:

Greedy, money-minded mafias –  
Land, forest, sand, quarry  
Supported by government officials  
topple age-old climatic seasons  
Natural dense forests are swept away  
to create concrete buildings and townships  
(“No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds”, *Cataracts of Compassion* 52)

The poem ends on almost a note of despair and hopelessness:

How can there be any repair?  
No balm can cure Nature's wounds.  
(“No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds”, *Cataracts of Compassion* 52)

Vehemence comes out in the shape of curse and accordingly, the poet has written a poem entitled "Dogs' Curse on Human Beings":

Curse upon you human beings  
You are the most selfish  
ungrateful and cruellest  
of all creations on this planet

(“Dogs’ Curse on Human Beings”, *Cataracts of Compassion* 32)

In yet another wonderful poem, the poet screams out to humanity:

Busy and selfish,  
Devoid of humanity  
Each one lost  
In his own island.

(“City Versus Village”, *Winged Reason* 71)

Men don’t spare men, what to talk about the inanimate beings. This aspect has not escaped our poet at all and he is very conscious about this brutality in human nature:

Alas! Like a vulture came the car then;  
Picked me in and dashed away.

.....

The bearded man slapped helpless Anand  
“Go to the shops and beg or I’ll kill you.”

(“Anand’s Lot”, *Winged Reason* 26-27)

He talks about the discord and conflict in the family of the alcoholics too, portraying the miserable plight of the family:

Drunkard husband  
will come at night  
to resume beats and kicks.

(“What A Birth”, *Winged Reason* 58)

The poet does not spare the evil practices prevalent in the society too. He has drawn a very realistic picture of a girl, who is faced with the ill-effects of dowry:

Plenty of proposals,  
.....  
None complained my looks.  
“What’s the dowry!”

(“Laxmi’s Plea”, *Winged Reason* 46)

Her plight is so miserable that in the end, when she remarks:

Leave me alone;  
Leave me single.

(“Laxmi’s Plea”, *Winged Reason* 46)

We are forced to be thoughtful about these social evils destroying sane personalities into embittered individuals, which is indeed a slap on our social system.

Dominic just does not talk about other human beings by putting himself on a pedestal, high above them, looking down. Rather, he examines himself and the result is a sensitive poem like “What’s Wrong With Me?”, where he is unable to take his dinner without feeding his own dogs and cats. He asks his wife, Anne, about this:

Spouse Ann repeats everyday;  
They shall be served  
after we finish our meals

(“What’s Wrong With Me?”, *Cataracts of Compassion* 67)

Her reply intrigues him. He does not say anything to her but wonders if there is something wrong with him. The ending lines of the poem highlight his pathetic internal plight, which translates in beautiful soul-searching lines such as:

Is it fault treating animals  
on a par with humans?

(“What’s Wrong With Me?”, *Cataracts of Compassion* 67)

K V Dominic talks about spirituality too, but it is a shade different than what is normally construed. According to him, God does not exist in temples, mosques, churches and the like. We would then ask where God is to be found. He answers meditatively:

.....  
doing real services  
through words and actions  
to your fellow beings  
including non-human  
and plant world?

(“What is Spirituality?” *Cataracts of Compassion* 66)

Reflecting the myriad shades of life in his poems with his compassionate, sensitive, yet stern and honest approach, our contemporary poet of considerable merit is still hopeful and grateful to God, when he celebrates communal harmony amidst all strife.

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)

Thus, we find that the poet, though sad at the wrong behaviour of human beings with human beings and the inanimate world by and large does still have faith in the goodness of mankind and redemption. His compassion and sensitivity do not allow him to become totally negative towards this otherwise beautiful universe.

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## **K. V. Dominic – A Passionate Nature-loving Poet of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Chitra Lele**

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To review a substantial body of creative work is a challenging job, and particularly when it is inked by the sensitive quill of a passionate poet and writer like K. V. Dominic. K. V. Dominic's prolific poetic output is a milestone in the Indian-English poetry landscape and a hub of humanitarian values, which will not only guide the current generation but also provide a beacon of hope for the generations to come. The poet himself is hopeful of a new beginning and with conviction in his words, K. V. Dominic marches on this perilous path, inspiring one and all to join his bandwagon of positive progress and social transformation.

Poetry and Mother Nature are intrinsically interlinked, and K. V. Dominic is one such powerful linking component in this poetry-nature tapestry. K. V. Dominic's love and respect for Mother Nature and her elemental energies can be measured from his own lines in the preface to his book *Multicultural Symphony*: "The huge devastation done to the nature and environment by sand mafia, forest mafia and quarry mafia goads me to react through my only medium, poetry." Atrocities and sufferings of any kind inflicted either by the vicissitudes of fate or by the vagaries of mankind make the poet's empathetic heart bleed, especially the destruction of Mother Nature and her

generous gifts. His poetry is a crystal clear reflection of the bitter-sweet truths of the dark modern-day world, and at the same time, an ode to the wonders and powers of nature.

K. V. Dominic's poems deal with deep-rooted themes and tones: social issues, corruption, exploitation of Mother Nature, universal brotherhood and many more. K. V. Dominic is a perfect combination of realism and idealism: on the one hand, the poet paints the dark themes of the world on his poetic canvas, and on the other hand, he also conjures up a dreamscape of a perfect, nature-loving world. Describing nature and the deep emotions and life lessons associated with it is what makes K. V. Dominic's nature poems a masterpiece. Sharing a few lines from the poignant and moving poem, 'Lessons from Fruit Trees' (*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*, 2016):

Nature is the best teacher  
Modest and humble man  
learns eternal truths from it  
Plants and trees exhilarated  
when flowers are born  
Beautiful colours and  
sweet smelling petals  
make plants most pretty  
and attract variety of flies  
and even human beings

The sights and sounds of Mother Nature help us to connect to each other on a deeper level. K. V. Dominic's poems open the subtle door through which these sublime sounds and sights can enter into our heart hubs. When we all are connected to each other on a deeper level through our heart hubs, wars and unrest are bound to vanish from the horizon and peace and unity are bound to be established beyond borders.

The following lines from the poem 'Wagamon' are a testimony for the poet's deep emotions for nature and his

artistic command over words to express these deep emotions. These deep emotions about Mother Nature are wonderfully verbalised, and speak to the very essence in each and every individual, thereby opening the spiritual realm and sensitising us to the nurturing powers of nature.

Pine valleys of Wagamon,  
an exotic wild beauty.  
Tall and thick pine trees  
support firmament  
from falling.  
God has spread  
a fantastic carpet  
knitted by  
dry pine leaves;  
lying relaxed,  
people draft requests,  
and angles descend  
through the pine trees  
and take these requests  
to His office.  
The sun is always gentle;  
always seems an evening;  
nocturnal music  
of crickets,  
resounding hymns of angels,  
and semi darkness  
lift our minds  
to an eternal  
abode of repose.

With a naturalist's sensitivity and resonant imagery, K. V. Dominic brings out the divine elements of Mother Nature and presents nature and human beings as complementary elements of a sum of the whole, and his verses of "Nature's Bounties (Haiku)" is an indication of this eternal equation (that mankind is not playing its role of honoring and balancing this equation):

The song of cuckoo  
Night's dirge  
Day's trumpet

The birth of morn  
Hymns from temples and mosques  
Heaven on earth

The sun kisses  
The eye opens  
Lotus blooms

Fragrance of the rose  
Intoxication to the fly  
Dancing round the plant

Jasmine's hand  
Touches my neck  
Utter dilemma

Mellow yellow papaya  
Longing violent kisses  
Feasting to crows and mynahs

Lightning and thunder  
God's fire works  
Man fears!

Summer showers  
Roof of GI sheet  
Divine fingers on drums

Parched fields  
Rain in summer  
Honey to the lips

Refreshing downpour  
Child's temptation  
Drenched dancing

Road filled with rainwater  
Child on bicycle  
Splashing in ecstasy

Snow-capped mountain  
Multi-coloured sky  
God with the brush

Through a sharp and spiritual eye, K. V. Dominic laments over the broken balance of the essential elements of nature, caused by destruction, lack of empathy, greed and mania of materialism, in his poem 'Nature Weeps'. Here are a few verses from this poem that will strike the innermost chords of the readers; they are an awakening call for compassion towards our Mother Nature:

Lilly flower looks  
reddish and morose:  
had a shower in acid rain

Roses aren't smiling:  
stinky insecticides  
keeps flies from embrace

Mellow mango  
clings to branch:  
man will destroy its nut

Cow cries continuously  
since calf doesn't suck:  
artificial cattle feed

Rainbows appear  
only on papers:  
no moist in the sky

Through several poems in his collection titled, *Cataracts of Compassion*, K. V. Dominic goes beyond the myopic vision and in almost an epiphanic manner shares his spiritual and intellectual

realisation of the sacred essence through his innate connection with Mother Nature. The poems in this collection are the pearls of wisdom culled from the deep oceans of the poet's passionate psyche.

The following lines from the poem 'Tearful Exodus' – express the stark reality of this world-man destroys nature and hence destroys mankind eventually – that leave an indelible impression on the minds of the readers.

Alas, they have become victims of  
nature's annihilating human villains  
who turned fertile lands to arid wastelands  
and then lead luxurious lives in AC rooms  
and bathe in swimming pools in metro cities  
When miserable farmers in thousands  
make tearful exodus for their survival  
criminal billionaires fly abroad  
seeking refuge from government's arrest  
for evading tax and keeping trillions of  
black money in foreign non taxable banks

The poet experiences the immense pains inflicted on Mother Nature by versifying them. As a creator of magnificent metaphors and incredible imagery, K. V. Dominic experiences two worlds – sometimes moving around in the real, harsh world and sometimes floating freely in the inner, soft firmament of his reflective mind. His simple and direct style has brought him closer to poetry lovers, and in turn, brought these poetry lovers more to Nature. Each of his poems has an immediacy to it that catches the attentions of the readers.

K. V. Dominic's philosophical voice and evocative style bring out the vagaries of humans against Mother Nature, and one such example is 'Sleepless Nights', which exposes how mankind has built a concrete jungle around itself to keep at bay the beauties and bounties of Nature, and how mankind has

given more importance to the transitory, unnatural pleasures rather than embrace the natural, everlasting bliss of divinity:

I lie in my concrete house,  
fighting against the man-made heat,  
and the dreary sound of the hot-wave fan.  
The late and heavy supper in stomach,  
and all such unnatural ways of life  
take away that God's own gift.

In the poem 'On Conservation', the poet points out the critical importance of conserving the natural resources or else mankind will be in dire straits. In the poem 'Siachen Tragedy', each verbal unit operates at its highest velocity and this quality of the poet can be found in numerous other poems. In the poem 'Mullaperiyar Dam', the poet's verbal versatility functions in full gusto. In the poem 'Dignity of Labour', the poet puts the spotlight on the spurious attitude of his countrymen and shares with the readers his microscopic observation of the social situation. In the poem 'I am Just a Mango Tree', the poet expresses the agony of a humble mango tree inflicted by the merciless acts of man. In the poem, 'Protest against Sand Mafia', the poet strongly condemns the illegal sand mining operations carried out by corrupt elements of society on the coast of Kerala. K. V. Dominic is versatile in his poems and can handle a haiku with as much ease as an epic poem. His wise words are simple, yet intense and moving.

In several of his popular Nature poems, K. V. Dominic versifies the feelings of animals to depict the heartbreaking plight of Nature. With an aching heart, K. V. Dominic succeeds in painting a solemn picture of the unlimited greed and inhuman nature of mankind in the poem 'In Sheep's Wail':

With your brain  
and with your tongue  
you conquered us.

Superior you boast,  
but inferior you become  
to the microbes that kill you.

The fur God gave me,  
mercilessly you shear  
to make you cozy.

The milk for my lamb  
you suck and drain  
and grow fat and cruel.

I have seen with my eyes  
and heard with my ears  
the last cries of my parents.

.....

Man, you are the cruelest,  
you are the most ungrateful  
of all God's creations.

K. V. Dominic's poems on Nature will surely make the readers see Mother Nature in a different light, and make the readers respect and admire her even more. Just as the generous gifts of Mother Nature are timeless so are the poet's verses, and this attribute makes K. V. Dominic a poet of all times and seasons. It is the sensibility and sensitivity at this poet's core that have the power to awaken and ignite the inner spark of kindness in the readers towards all aspects of our existence, including Mother Nature. His verses are of enduring virtues, and his sensitivity expressed through simple words is a treasure trove of insights. His poems are a critical component of the growing global movement against all evils. K. V. Dominic is a rising star in the sky of Indian-English poetry who invites one and all to share and spread the spectacular colors of the cosmic canvas.

## Emancipation through Dominic's Poetry

Daya Dissanayake

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I met and came to know Dr. K. V. Dominic in cyberspace many years ago, through his poetry. When I first met him, he fitted the image I already had in mind. I have read most of his poems, and consider him as one of the leading poets in India writing in English. Through his writing we learn not only about Dominic's poetry and about the man himself, but also see the world through his mind's eye. When we read him, we meet Dominic the rebel, the visionary, the recluse, and always the truly humane human being.

In most of Dominic's poems, I find that he is trying to seek Emancipation, true emancipation for all life on Mother Earth and not just for the human beings. He tells us that we, all of us, have to achieve Humanism, by becoming humane, once again. We have to get back our empathy. There are many things we have to do, we have to give up, and we have to accept. The path is tough, with many obstacles, temptations, mirages to divert us, and to prevent us from reaching our goal. It is the path shown to us by all great religious leaders.

Dominic wrote in the introduction to *Multicultural Symphony*, "Poetry is the best and easiest medium of imparting messages and values to the people. In this busy digital age which is fast

deteriorating in eternal human values, poetry has a great role in moulding cultured and civilised society. Now coming to my themes in this book. Basically I am a follower of Advaita philosophy. Though I am a Christian by birth I believe in Advaita.”

Perhaps he was influenced from birth by Adi Sankara, who consolidated Advaita Vedanta, as Dominic share the same birthplace with Adi Sankakra. Dominic explains his thinking:

My commonsense doesn't allow me to see God as a separate entity. I believe that there is a divinity in all bodies, both living and non-living. To me this universe is a big concert or symphony, a harmony of diverse notes. All creations play their role in concordance, but man tries to play discordant notes – stands against the rhythmic flow of the system.... The inter-relationship between Man, God and Universe is the main theme of my poems. To me science and religion are two sides of the same coin. As man is the latest evolutionary being, he should respect other beings and plants which have greater legacy to claim in this universe. The intellectual capacity of man is used more for destruction than construction, more for vices than virtues.

Dominic reminds us that among human beings, development always means destruction. He has added:

The huge devastation done to the nature and environment by sand mafia, forest mafia and quarry mafia goads me to react through my only medium, poetry. 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. Sexism or discrimination shown to woman as part of patriarchy is another wounding thorn which forces me to react through poetry.

Today we are only worshipping the signboards pointing out the Path, instead of trying to move along the Path. Religious writings are not read by most of us with an interest to understand and follow what is written.

My materialist neighbours  
go to church everyday;  
read the Bible everyday;  
but never read the part  
to love other beings  
as fellow beings.

(“Massacre of Cats”)

And again,

serving God in human form  
is more rewarding than  
serving Him in abstract terms.

(“Sister Mercy”)

Most of us recite the sacred literature, often in languages we do not understand, or even if the literature is in our mother tongue, we do not bother to consider what the words and the contents mean to us. Or we do it as a religious compulsion or expecting some favour or benefit. That is why a poet's role becomes more and more important as one of the best and simplest mediums to take the message to the people. Dominic is doing just that, making us pause and think and try to become humane once again, try to find Emancipation. He says, “I have only one motive behind my compositions – imparting some messages and values to the young minds which are groping in darkness and ignorance. Today's youth are disillusioned and they lead a futile life. They have no role models or messiahs to lead them in the right track.” Let the youth find role models in poets like Dominic, whose message could reach into their hearts and minds.

We read poetry for enjoyment, for relaxation and for aesthetic appreciation. We also understand what is written, and when we read a good poem, it remains with us, sometimes become a part of us. That is what Dominic's poetry does to us. Since his poetry covers so many areas, so many lines of thought,

this paper is an attempt to consider a few poems which could lead us towards true Emancipation.

Emancipation is the nearest word we can get in the English language for *Moksha*, *Vimukthi*, *Nirvana* or *Svarga*. It is not beyond our reach, but even if it wasn't, we can still strive for it. When Ashoka Raja in his rock inscriptions at Rupnath and Brahmagiri mentioned people were mingling with the gods, I prefer to interpret that the people themselves were the gods, those who live by Dhamma are the gods and goddesses and they mingle with others who are beginning to follow the path of the Dhamma, and that is emancipation.

When he gets the Cow on the Lane to ask,  
This world is not your grandpa's.  
It's so vast and wide.  
Can't you take another route?

(“Cow on the Lane”)

Dominic tells us that we can still reverse our present role as the most invasive and destructive species on earth, and seek a path with the least disturbance and least destruction. We need not and should not disturb the cow lying on the middle of the road, because she has an equal right to the space, which would have been used by her ancestors long before man built the road.

Dominic asks another question in another poem, which we all have to ask ourselves:

Dear my fellow beings  
why are we crazy of labels?  
(“Multicultural Harmony”)

And then had added:

Since you are selfish and greedy  
you take more than  
what is due to you  
Other beings struggle for necessities

whereas you are after  
comforts and luxuries

(“Multicultural Harmony”)

The Multicultural harmony on earth among all living beings and nature was disrupted by man, in his insatiable greed. If we, the governments, mass media and writers, can do away with all labels, then only could we have true harmony and emancipation. It is all the man made labels that are keeping us apart, making our brother, our next door neighbour, to become strangers, sometimes rivals, enemies. Labels make us chauvinists. Believing our nation, race, language or religion is superior we are clinging on to childish behaviour. Labels prevent us from seeing the fellow beings as members of our own species.

Plants and animals never divide  
the earth among themselves;  
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?

(“Haves and Have-nots”)

We have to emancipate the millions of starving children. We are all responsible for child abuse, violence against children, when we deprive them of their right of an equal share of food, while we overeat, and waste so much food. We deprive them of their rightful share by over-consumption and by criminal waste. We allow our children too to over-consume, and throw away food. The second Precept of the Five Precepts of Buddhism is to “refrain from taking what is not given to us”, which means we must not take what is not ours, but what belongs to others. The Bible says “you shall not steal”, but we are stealing the food from starving children. The Quran says “not to devour the wealth of orphans”. In Hindu scriptures we have the word ‘*Asteya*’, “the abstinence, in one’s deeds or words or thoughts,

from unauthorised appropriation of things of value from another human being". Dominic is reminding us of all this, without resorting to preaching"

“My dear child  
whenever you  
sit before food  
lend your ears  
to the hungry cries  
of millions of kids  
and the moans  
of their helpless mummies.”

(“Hungry Mouths”)

Most of us talk about Karma, some believe in it, but do not think of the real Karmic effects, or the concept of cause and effect. Dominic explains *Satvik Karma* in poetic terms in “What is Karma?” We all of us need to become, at least to the best of our ability, *Satvik* persons. It is then only that our actions will help in the well-being of all life on Mother Earth, and not cause any harm or grief to others.

Loves all objects of universe;  
animate and inanimate;  
animal world and plant world.

(“What is Karma?”)

There is child abuse not only in the home but even in religious institutions. We need to stop this and answer Dominic's poser:

Why do you seek God  
When a child  
Stands before you?

(“Triplets of Wisdom”)

We try to see God in the statues, inside temples, instead of trying to see Him in ourselves, in our fellow human beings and the animals and plants around us.

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

(“Ananthu and the Wretched Kite”)

The words in the above poem bring us to the dilemma faced by a humane 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?

(“A Spider in my Bathroom”)

‘The Celebration of the Birth of a Girl Child’, in Piplantri village in Rajasthan is what we should all practice all over the world, for a girl-child is the most precious gift to the world. She is a mother-to-be, to produce, nurse and care for the future generation. If we have a regard and respect for motherhood we have to regard and respect the girl-child, from the moment of her birth, or even from her conception. She has the major role to play in the continuation of the human race.

‘Murugan, God of Beggars’ tells us of a true God, a humane God, trying to emancipate the people abandoned by all the man-created gods. This poem once again reminds us that God is within us, and among us, that it is our responsibility, and within our powers and capabilities, to help our fellow beings and all life on earth.

Dominic is trying to make us listen to the groans of Mother Earth, because if we can listen and feel the pain of

Mother Earth and all her children, it is only then we can emancipate all.

Man, can't you hear those tremors of curses  
hurled on you by endangered animals, birds and plants?  
Man, I can hear mother earth cursing you  
As Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna  
(“I can hear the groan of Mother Earth”)

We need to listen, not only to the voices and cries of other human beings, but also to the cries of those other animals around us. Then Mother Earth would not have to curse us, but will only bless us.

When will the Black and the White  
dwell in the same house  
and dine from the same plate?  
When will we behold God's creation  
with impartial eyes  
and find His beauty in all forms?  
(“Crow, the Black Beauty”)

The Black and White, the tall and short, the big and small,  
we must all dwell in the same house, together, sharing the same  
food, same water, same air.

Finally a message to all fellow poets:  
Kindly write on the need of the day  
the necessity of conservation  
of plants and animals on earth  
(“On Conservation”)

## **Pigmented Poetic Passage of K. V. Dominic**

**Dr. Arbind Kumar Choudhary**

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K. V. Dominic who has a number of poetry collections to his credit has been widely published due to innovative imagery, Indian sensibility, universal vision, natural iridescence, lyrical luminosity and poetic passion for Tom, Dick, and Harry in general and the versifiers in particular from India, the cultural land of milk and honey. His poetic passion that runs wild across his verses makes him the darling of the poetic community in and outside India. He is the suitor of nature and its pigmented colours, fragrant flowers, running water, blowing air, chirping birds, roaring clouds, sparkling rainbow, bowing trees, juicy fruits and green meadows that make him a Romantic poet in Indian English poetry. Emotional eruption of verses keeps him beside the pupil of The Aurobindonean School of Poetry where Indian sensibility in all its forms flourishes with the passage of time. His Keralite poetic background adds additional flavour in his poetic glamour. The cultural monarchy of Indian Territory has been painted across his verses that makes him out and out an Indian English poet. There are a number of critical works, reviews, poems, awards, editorial board member of many literary journals and several other honorable posts of the literary field to his poetic credit that makes him out and out an Indian

English poet in the firmament of Indian English poetry. Prof. T. V. Reddy comments on his writings:

Thus Dr. Dominic is a poet with social awareness which fills almost all the lines of his poems and it is no exaggeration to say that his profound concern for the society forms the life force and breath of his poetry. He says in his Preface, corruption has become the hallmark of these leaders and influenced by them the masses also deviate from the right track to the evil truck. And who will save this society? My answer is writers particularly poets who are like prophets.' Thus it is quite clear that Dominic is a poet of the suffering masses and oppressed sections of the society; moreover his poems are a strong testimony to his socialistic ideas, to his leaning towards communistic ideology and to his earnest zeal as a social reformer. His poems in general are more descriptive and narrative than suggestive. (730-31)

Nature is his guide that shapes the course of his poetic journey with the passage of time. The junction of Indian sensibilities, cultural heraldry, mythical meridian, global vision, emotional eruption, love for nature and beauty and various others that bloom and zoom across his verses makes him a poet of great repute without dispute from the fertile literary land of India, known worldwide for its cultural sanctity amidst the masses all around the globe. The poetic ingredients of his verses enliven the poetic passage of The Aurobidonean School of Poetry in Indian English literature. Like the Romantic poets K. V. Dominic is a great lover of nature and its iridescence in general and the animals, birds, insects and other living beings in particular. The human generations try their best to establish their own kingdom at the cost of natural annihilation for which they get themselves eternally cursed in the court of the sovereignty. Though all natural objects, living and non-living things are for sake of the human race, yet they are brutally killed in the kingdom of human beings. As an ecologist Dominic cites example of Charles Darwin, patron saint of animals and raises

the irrational theories of the religious fanatics because men have been found prone to vice than virtue. The animal world rarely commits crime with human world or natural world unlike the human beings ever found engaged in crimes, killings, tortures and annihilations for their own sake of selfishness.

His love for life is supreme due to the aims and objectives fixed to get it fulfilled in due course. His struggle of life is better than ever for the corridor of the common herd. Life is itself a pious journey that requires motivation rather than humiliation. His poetic passion goes against those who breed disharmony, disintegration and frustration amidst the common masses. Exploitation in any forms can rarely be appreciated anywhere in the world. His love for the pauper makes him the champion of the paupers' community while intense passion for natural iridescence makes him a poet of Romantic tradition in Indian English poetry. K. V. Dominic paints a horrible picture of this immoral society in which the old parents and other helpless members of the family become burden for their own children. The house in which they serve the family for the whole life is later treated like the burden of the same family at their old age. PCK Prem comments here:

K. V. Dominic talks of workers and labourers and feels convinced that only a socialistic pattern of society in "Indian Democracy" can make people prosperous and content. He is quite pessimistic about life of people in the present system and one can observe consequences so vividly in "Lal Salaam to Labourers" where he pays glowing tributes to the indomitable working spirit of workers of the world. He calls workers to be the backbone of the country. Imbued with a socialistic thought, Ruskin's moral attitude to workers does attract Dominic. (185)

His verses consist the poetic ingredients – satire, humor, irony, pathos and ridicule that have been dealt with minutely in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel who has been popularly called

Father of Post-Independence Indian English verses. Dominic's satiric tone on burning issues, humorous message on outdated notions, ironical approach and melancholic tone that run wild across his verses make him a versifier of the Ezekielean School of Poetry in Indian English literature. There will be little exaggeration if we call his verses the junction of the Aurobindonean and the Ezekielean School of Poetry in Indian English literature. His ridicule on political propagandists, religious dogmas, superstitious notion, earth hunger, power monger and lust for wealth keeps him besides the Neo-classical writers of English poetry. K. V. Dominic's comment makes his concept of life clear here:

Basically I am a follower of Advaita philosophy. Though I am a Christian by birth I believe in Advaita. My commonsense doesn't allow me to see God as a separate entity. I believe that there is a supreme power or energy which is controlling this universe. We call it God or the creator. That power is the spirit or soul of the universe and its element is present in all its creations including atoms. Thus divinity is there in all bodies, both living and nonliving.

*(Multicultural Symphony 8)*

His poetic garden shapes many a peeping soul who wishes to establish their future in poetic world. His slogan 'Work is Worship' captivates the verse suitors to its utmost degrees. His poem 'God is Helpless' elicits his concept for the ecological order on this strife-stricken earth. The power monger hankers after the chair by hook or by crook. The earth hunger digs the grave of his own reputation and destroys natural sanctity for his own sake. This stanza brings to light his concept for ecological sanctity on this earth for mirth.

Petitions come to me  
one after another  
from plants and animals.  
All complain of  
your cruelty and torture:

they have no food;  
they have no water;  
and not even air.

(*Write Son*, Write 64)

Like Nissim Ezekiel Dominic raises the burning issues of India and throws light candidly in several poems. There lies a bone of contention between India, China and Pakistan. The government is forced to spend more money on defence than social welfare that results in poverty, hunger and dissatisfaction and nothing else. The power monger deals the critical situations cleverly for his own sake and continues the power on the name of prosperity and nationality with might and main. The politicians use the military power as their tools and befool the masses for their own sake.

India has remained not only a land of saints and incarnations but also the terrorists who blast bombs at public place in trains and in buses and make victims of the civilians to dread the society and observe the duty of Ramaraj. The heinous crimes of the terrorists are always shameful for the glittering India in the days to come. His poems consist of a cluster of the proverbial passages that appeals most to the critics and the versifiers alike. Appreciating his poetic pigments the poet PCK Prem writes in *English Poetry in India*.

K. V. Dominic is emotionally attached to issues that have social ramifications primarily concentrating on the aspirations of the neglected sections. Poetry is a vehicle with him to convey deeply felt anxieties to the people. In the following lines, he truly paints a picture of rural and village life where to him; rural life appears more peaceful and harmonious.

How innocent is  
the life in the village!  
Thousands live as  
brothers and sisters.  
The gullible people are

fooled, ignored, cheated  
and looted by the townsmen.

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

He harbours an outlook that it is only in rural areas that life is full of joy and delight with no malice. But here he forgets that now with the onslaught of modern craving for luxurious living it is difficult to curb ambitions. So life in rural areas is also not very sweet and dreamy. (278)

There are a number of social, national, global, natural and historical issues he raises very eloquently in one poem after another. His selfless dedication to the literary world, intense passion for the moral society and message of natural harmony reserve for him a permanent berth in the history of Indian English poetry.

K. V. Dominic is one of the leading contemporary Indian English poets from the fertile literary soil of Kerala who has started to perfume the Indian poetic passage with captivating capital idea, innovative poetic approach and forceful versification for the literary prosperity of Tom, Dick and Harry in general and the poetry lovers in particular on this strife-stricken earth.

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## Resplendence and Symphony in K.V. Dominic's Poetry

Manas Bakshi

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'Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood'-

-T. S. Eliot.

As I venture to ride this article the comment of the great poet seems perfectly in conformity with the poetry of K. V. Dominic. Not only that, if expressing oneself poetically with words emanating from a deep sense of realisation of life in reality with the whiff of passionate emotions and feelings which offers a glimpse of someone's poetic sensibility, Dominic has definitely done that with his maiden venture *Winged Reason* brought out in 2010. Since then he has published four more books of poems namely *Write Son, Write* (2011), *Multicultural Symphony* (2014), *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* (2016), *Cataracts of Compassion* (2017) and numerous volumes of assessment and critical works on contemporary Indo-English Literature apart from editing deftly two biannual journals of repute – IJML And WEC. The present paper aims at finding out how the poet explores resplendence and symphony in varied aspects around life and its surroundings, and how he gives them shape into sensitive poetry.

What is sensitive poetry? It is such emotional vivacity that touches one's heart and leaves lasting impression. Dominic's poetry is powerful to the extent that it moves one if he/she is cogitative about the day to day happenings in this madding world of stark reality. And as the poet delineates on multidimensional textures exposing his concern for Nature, Humanism, Ecology and events with an impact, Dominic's poetry ultimately compels one to discern "truth in beauty."

It is because of Dominic's profundity of knowledge and enriched experience that even some stray and prosaic matters or seemingly not-so-significant incidents come alive in his poetic outpourings. Here are a few instances from his first book of poems *Winged Reason*:

Many months have passed  
since I left my mummy, dad and Smitha.  
Are they still crying at my loss?  
Tears streamed down from Anand's cheeks.  
"Bloody dog, why are you standing still?"  
The bearded-man slapped helpless Anand.  
"Go to the shops and beg or I'll kill you"  
Crying, Anand stretched his hand  
Went begging shop after shop.

(*Winged Reason* 27)

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

(*Winged Reason* 37)

All echoes of years of yore.  
Problems remain the same  
Woman is the game  
Birth to death,  
an instrument of lust  
and hot-selling sex.

(*Winged Reason* 42)

It goes without saying that Dominic explores strange facets of life with a subtle bearing on humankind. It can be marked that his maiden venture *Winged Reason* not only provides a poetic glimpse of some vital social issues but also mirrors some of the real-life sequences in a fascinating way, like a 'hawk hovering in the sky' vis-à-vis 'two ragged girls outside / struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin' (*Winged Reason* 22). Here, the trait is overt but the gesture is covert as in another poem dwelling on city versus village life:

How innocent and malice-free  
 Is village life  
 Where all live  
 In harmony and love.  
 They are gullible –  
 So fooled and cheated  
 And looted by the townsmen.

(*Winged Reason* 72)

Reviewing the book, Patricia Prime opines “Dominic blends the complex tradition of English verse into something wholly his own, and the poems do so in a variety of forms and via different arguments, all of which amount to Dominic’s interest in social themes” (269). This is so because, though a baptized Christian Dominic believes in the concept of Jeevatma (individual soul) and Paramatma (universal soul). And his bold confession, in this respect, is “all living beings are part of Paramatma of God”, and “the Creator has given man permission to use plants just for his survival” (*Winged Reason* 14). He not only avows that animals and plants have the same right to survive as the human beings but also advocates the Advaitaphilosophy which signifies the close and eternal propinquity between Nature, God and His creation. And it has to be like that since the preaching’s of Adi Sankara who

consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta immensely cast an impact on the mindset of Dominic.

Be it the tenet of the Christianity, the Hinduism or the Buddhism, be it the influence of the veteran British, American or the Indo-English poets, Dominic has the guts to “take poetry and short story as a weapon and reaction to the evils of the society.” For, he believes in the social philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ which means ‘the whole of humanity is made of one life energy.’ In his article, Dominic expounds: “It is because of the selfish petty mind of human beings that they consider themselves as separate entities having no connection to other beings and objects of this world” (Dominic “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” 45).

In the title poem of his second book *Write Son, Write* the poet affirms:

Write, my son,  
Write  
Living beings and  
lifeless objects  
all ininter-related.

(*Write Son, Write* 25)

Again, as if God asks:  
Who gave you right  
to kill my creations?  
The way you torture  
fowl and cattle,  
bereft food and water,  
caged and chained,  
gasp in sunlight  
You cut their throat  
live to their eyes.

(*Write Son, Write* 29)

The tonal empathy vibrant in this poem is also manifest in several other poems in the book like "Resolution," "Hunger's Call" and "Teresa's Tears"; but on the question of human values that are fast fizzling out from our familiar ambient, in the issue of feelings for each other not in human society but also all in this planet, Dominic strikes the right chord for introspection by all of us, for the benefit of our future generation too in the following lines:

When will "crow-crow" be  
pleasing as "koo-koo"?  
When will the Black be  
kindred to the White?  
When will the Black and the White  
dwell in the same house  
and dine from the same plate?  
When will we behold God's creation  
with impartial eyes  
and find His beauty in all forms?

*(Write Son, Write 58)*

Dominic's thought-provoking poems on ecology once again propel the view that human beings are destroying Nature for their own satisfaction. Is it not greed, caring not at all for other species, not even for his own future? So much so that God seems to have been rendered helpless for not being able to save his creation, from the disaster caused by the nincompoop 'selfish to the core':

Who told you to emit  
toxic gas and defile  
the sky, pure and clear?  
Your wells are dry;  
River are dry;  
I am not responsible.  
You have dug your grave,  
and what am I to do?

*(Write Son, Write 64)*

Dehydration caused wrinkles;  
Smooth skin turned  
sore and scaly;  
Lovely long haired women  
appeared shaved-headed ghosts.

*(Write Son, Write 91)*

The coexistence of human beings, animals and plants is what is prescribed by the law of Nature or the Creator. Any move to go against His will is bound to boomerang. Deforestation, wanton pollution and depletion of water bodies have added to the spate of global warming. In effect, “scarcity of water will lead to anxiety, depression, displeasure, aggression and aversion. The climate change will bring out the danger by restricting our access to the basic needs of our life” (Sebastian 149). The threat to environment and our immediate responsibility to ward it off have been emphasized in many a poem of Dominic to prove how Nature and mankind are, from the beginning, interlinked.

On the socio-political issues too, Dominic's poetry dominates with the articulation:

No difference at all  
between religious  
and intellectual mafias;  
Twin sides  
of the same coin.

*(Write Son, Write 37)*

And there is no doubt that several socio-political maladies haunting our society at present tend to tarnish the image of Indian Democracy:

Thus democracy reigns  
drinking tears of thousands  
.....  
Brought from jails

to prove majority on floor;  
Horse-trade of billions  
Corrupt governments  
draining the blood of people.

(*Write Son, Write* 60)

Matha, I know the cause of your tears:  
Religious, political, intellectual mafias  
tear thy heart and drink your blood.

(*Write Son, Write* 43)

In his review article, Dr. D. C. Chambial writes “the poet’s concern for the country as one being weakened by its own people is also manifest. The Indian virtue of harmony in diversity seems at stake at the face of some shenanigans and multi-faceted mafias jeopardize not only her unity but also her very nature” (179). The anguish and sufferings of urban life also find a place in his poetry as much as the thoughts on justice, peace and harmony more prominently in his third book *Multicultural Symphony*.

While in a poem like “Lal Salam to Labour” the poet urges cavils at what the meek and weak sections of the Indian polity have been deprived of, he also urges for their legitimate claim:

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

(*Winged Reason* 45)

Terrorism, originating from religious fanaticism is a widespread malady in today’s world that irks Dominic. And he justifiably is vocal about the menacingly growing terrorism in the poem “Train Blast.”

Krishna  
why are you  
so indifferent?

Can't you punish  
these terrorists  
as you punished  
Asuras?

*(Write Son, Write 86)*

As we come to the issue of destroying the evil forces the Asuras who are at the centre point of terrorism all over the world, we are invariably reminded of the famous episode of 'Mahisasur Mardini' in the Hindu mythology. It has been nicely depicted in 'Durgasaptasati':

*Ardhaniskraanta evaasau  
Yuddhamano mahaasurab  
Tayaa mahaasinaa deryaa  
Sira chhitvaa nipaaitab.*

Here, the Asura is the demon and the goddess is Durga. Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya explicates "Come half way out from its own mouth the great demon, still flourishing, was beheaded by the great sword of the goddess. Thus the demon fell."

The irony is not only terrorism but several despicably malicious socio-economic evils are surfacing today with no hope of immediate redressal. One such is Civil War, and Dominic raises his voice in the poem 'Angles as Refugees'

How heart-rending is their wail from boats:  
Merciful God, kindly save us!  
What have we done to bear so  
bitter in our tender age?  
Why should we suffer for  
irrational vicious acts of our elders?

*(Cataracts of Compassion 27)*

The same exasperating grumble is manifest in another poem 'Irrational Discriminations' where Dominic questions:

How can you human beings differentiate in one species

.....

Isn't same red coloured blood passing through  
Whites, Blacks, Brahmins and Shudras?"

(*Cataracts of Compassion* 43)

Everywhere the poet pleads for learning the 'basics of the universe' which are 'variety and multicultural unity'. Interestingly in *Multicultural Symphony* the poet focuses at the very outset on:

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

(*Multicultural Symphony* 15)

And, with equal conviction he lashes out at issues like "Child Labour" (35), "On Conservation" (31), Bulbul's Nest (38) and "Valueless Education" (56). There is no question of expressing sympathy or crying hoarse over the oppression on child, need for conservation, swallowing of chicks in Bulbul's nest and valueless education but here Dominic questions as a poet quite aware of his socio-political responsibility, why this inequality and injustice are allowed to do fine in such a paralysed system as ours where

Leftovers of the  
ten percent Haves  
can sustain  
ninety percent Have-nots  
and make this hellish world  
a blissful heaven

(*Multicultural Symphony* 49)

True, poets alone cannot bring about radical change or socio-economic reforms; but can use their pen to stir up others' consciousness, to make others think over what mankind is

heading for. Poets themselves can also raise their voice if, as Dominic thinks, literary world can be moved by their creation – their forte.

And a poet like Dominic does so, even going to the extent to cavil at his own helpless condition for being a poet who, in his own words, has to surrender to the structure of super ego:

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.

*(Multicultural Symphony 64)*

To conclude, I find one aspect specially remarkable in the poetry of Dominic: Love for all – human beings, animals, plants, as also the inanimate. Because all are creations of God. And poetry, spiritual and social has got nowadays the imprints of globalisation by way of quick circulation so that human mind, if moved, may turn the essence to moral values and international brotherhood. From political corruption to child labour, from communalism to terrorism, from global warming to the glitz of globalisation – all are woven together to mean:

Why do you seek God  
when a child  
stands before you?

Drench in rain  
and extinguish  
fire in your mind

*(Cataracts of Compassion 62)*

For God is infinite love and Dominic's way of worshipping God is in serving the people. This is what his poetry is all about. This is what makes viewing Dominic's poetic voyage an experience par excellence.

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**Wailing Chords Probing Reasons in  
K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason***

**Dr. Shweta Sood**

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It is rightly said that poetry serves a powerful medium of spreading the community consciousness. Man and society are the two realities on earth which are unquestionably coexistent with one another. A major corpus of Dominic's *Winged Reason* (which is quoted as WR for the sake of convenience) talks about the losses and the consequent pain emanating from them. The poet's depiction is so realistic that it appears as if the poet has experienced and gone through such losses himself or has closely felt the grieving cries of the bearers of these losses. The poetic soul being a compassionate one is not ready to let him be silent and dumb on watching the injustice and travails in the surroundings but there ignites in it a spark of questions probing reasons on various issues which touch the chords of the readers. In his poems there is a genuine quest for finding reason whatever may be the issues since everything is correlated with emotions and compassions which matters most for a harmonious life. To cite an example, the very first poem "In Memoriam: George Joson" begins with a question, though the poet admits the helplessness of finding any reason behind it. The poem is an elegy addressing Dominic's dead friend Joson.

The poet evokes pathos in describing the innocence as well as the ignorance of the child towards the great loss of her father:

Why did you leave us so soon, dear Joson?  
(We are unable to find any reason.)

.....

The most painful was the sight  
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 (WR 17)

The poet also depicts the feebleness of human beings in the face of death and the necessity to surrender to “His” will:

What a game He plays!  
When He comes riding His chariot,  
none can say – “wait”. (WR 17)

Battles and wars in history have been rooted on the grounds of ego and lust for greed and authority. Such heinous acts committed under the negative influences of ill-will and hatred leave no scope for reason to weigh down the consequences of what is being done in the destructive hunger for power. Dominic wants to take a remedial step forging ahead to alleviate the burning social and global ailments, as we see in the following extract of the poem “A Blissful Voyage”:

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. (WR 21)

Further the poem signifies the potency of heart rending emotions, discerning bare the pain felt by the poet pleading “all

prophets” to come forward, extend their helping hand and “instill humanism” in the misguided humane world:

If I could fly like an angel,  
would plead all prophets  
to inspire and instill humanism  
in millions' communal minds. (WR 21)

Misguided human beings take on treacherous actions and turn disloyal and deceitful towards each other. The irony is that all kinds of perfidious acts are done “in the name of God”. The poet pinpoints the degradation of human values in the poem “In the Name of God”:

Criminal actions done  
in the name of God  
out number  
philanthropic services done  
in the name of God.  
Millions were killed in crusades  
in the name of God.  
Democracy is devalued  
in the name of God.  
Nepotism is supported  
in the name of God.  
Superstitions survive  
in the name of God.  
Communalism poisons  
in the name of God.  
Communalism is strangled  
in the name of God.  
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.  
Corruption is promoted  
in the name of God.  
God is dethroned  
in the name of God.  
And human gods are crowned  
in the name of God. (WR 69-70)

In a sarcastic tone Dominic exposes the dismal picture of “Indian democracy: / the largest on the planet;” where “Parliament elections” are won on the “stage of heinous means” (WR 60). The poetic consciousness laments the miserable state of affairs of his country stating that unfortunately the “Gullible people” vote the same politicians “again and again” since they feel helpless to be left with no other choice except of having to live in such a cramping and unhealthy atmosphere:

Secularism butchered;  
.....  
The real issues of the country  
never discussed among people.  
Election campaigns:  
fireworks of lies and abuses.  
.....  
democracy reigns  
drinking tears of thousands!  
Criminal MPs,  
brought from jails  
to prove majority on floor;  
horse-trade of billions!  
Corrupt governments,  
draining the blood of people.  
Gratitude to the voters!  
Gullible people,  
they vote them again and again;  
no other options.  
Still democracy shall prevail  
or tyranny will  
sit on the Chair. (WR 60-61)

“Tsunami Camps” is another poem which records the negligence of the government towards the wailings and woes of people during natural calamities like Tsunami. The poem clearly shows that corruption in the government agencies is responsible for precipitating human misery. Even the gods seem to be silent on their dreadful situation. Torn at the heart, these self-respected people somehow gather some courage to start their lives afresh, do the hard work to resume survival, and settle the things on their own in the direst of the circumstances. They feel so frustrated and humiliated that they straightaway refuse to be left begging and waiting for “help” from any quarters, whether it is from “the government” or from the “gods”:

How dreadful the life in Tsunami camps!  
 People burnt in man-made hells;  
 .....  
 Months have passed  
 since Tsunami tossed them from their houses.  
 Nothing left but mind and body;  
 counting days for their salvation  
 .....  
 and fight against destiny.  
 .....  
 Government gave kits and boxes;  
 kits don't contain essential things;  
 hearth produces more smoke than flames.  
 None hears their cries and complaints:  
 “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.”  
 “The filthy atmosphere of the camp  
 will bring several epidemics.”  
 “Give us boats and nets,  
 and we will earn our livelihood.”

“We don’t get any help  
either from the Right or from the Left.”  
Unending wails and unending sobs;  
not even gods listen to their cries. (WR 33-34)

“Haves and Have-nots” is another thought provoking poem which maddens the readers’ consciousness to imagine the disparities created by the so called wise man on earth. The world is ruled by the capitalists who act at such mean levels that the “Have-nots” who are in “majority,” have to live devoid of even the basic needs:

Haves and Have-nots:  
man-made categories;  
never in creator’s dream.  
.....  
When millions die of hunger,  
thousands compete for delicacies.  
Minority always luxuriates  
at the cost of  
majorities’ necessities.  
.....  
Capitalism rules the day;  
Have-nots numbers swell.  
Shattered and smashed  
are their dreams  
of health and happiness. (WR 36-37)

The poem “A Nightmare” strikes a bitter comparison between those who enjoy things in plenty to another group of people for whom it is even difficult to meet the two ends. The comparison is made through the image of “a hawk hovering in the sky” who during his flight, views such miserable sights that “tears” run down his “cheeks” and he does not wish to see any more of it. The poem is full of rich imagery juxtaposing affluence and dearth e.g. “an obese boy” beaten by his “mother” to “eat more” whereas a hunger stricken “child” “crying for a crumb;” “pompous guests” enjoying “rich delicacies” in a

“lavish wedding feast” while “outside” the “hall” “two ragged girls”... / struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin” to satisfy their hunger; and a leaking “public water tap / that made the road a black river” whereas “a waterless tap” elsewhere mocking “at the hopeless wait / of all the pots of the neighbourhood.” In another place, Dominic’s sharp eye captures the look of an ill-fated drama of fair and foul playing at “a liquor shop run by the government” where men hover themselves in a “long queue”... / Like a line of ants before their hole” while a “similar queue” can be seen on “the other side, / where poor women” stand for hours waiting for “their rations.” The image of a “boy in tears” being punished “for not wearing his tie! / In the humid weather of forty degrees” is an apt example of “slavish” mimicry of “a legacy of the West” (WR 22).

K. V. Dominic’s lyrics written on old age directly question the integrity in human relationships. Today’s so-called civilised generations knowingly remain ignorant to their duties towards their parents. The poet’s heart goes out for the wealthy old parents who suffer emotional vacuum in loneliness bereft of their sons’ attention; in an ironical comparison to “the slums” in the neighborhood whose “three generations lived” happily in the same “hut”:

See, that mansion a double-storeyed edifice!

.....

An old man and his wife reside there;  
sitting at the phone with sighs and moans,  
longed for the calls from their sons abroad.  
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! (WR 23)

Parent child bond shatters apart generation after generation though every one of them has to pass through the period of old

age at their destined time. The poem "Old Age" is full of irony as "Today's torturer" becomes "tomorrow's victim." The failure of getting love and "care" eventually creates an emotional void in the suffering souls:

Human life is a cycle:  
.....  
Old age begins to play its colours –  
The monarch of yesterday,  
feels humbled today.  
Imprisoned amidst unripe ripeness;  
utterly helpless,  
unyielding mind.  
The dearest children,  
to whom he looked and loved  
turn ungrateful.  
They hate and curse  
And never care.  
Ageism is contemptible;  
unpardonable too.  
Today's torturer  
tomorrow's victim;  
we live with ironies. (WR 51-52)

The poet is unmatched in depicting "the pangs of separation" felt by the old parents left alone in "Gayatri's Solitude". Admitted in an "old-age home", provided with all kinds of comforts by her "children" living "all in the States" "under illusion" that "their mother is cozy;" poor widowed "mother" is passing through a "miserable" state of affairs in the last days of her life. She has lost "hunger" as well as "sleep", and turned "pale and faded" like an "old lily flower." Her old eyes keep "looking at the far West / longing for her children's calls" (WR 31). She muses over the past "happy" times of "her parents" whose "children" and "grandchildren" were always at their beck and call. The continued anguish, dilemma in hopeless

waiting and inexpressible pain render her pessimistic to the core of heart:

The depth of maternal love  
and the pangs of separation  
no child can gauge. (WR 32)

The poet offers a big salute to the labourers in his eminent poem "Lal Salaam to Labour" working in all kinds of fields, and admits that it is due to their hard work that we enjoy everything in "life" at an easy pace; be it the grains, "clothes", "goods", "houses", roads, cleanliness, etc. They "nurture" "dreams" like us but when these are shattered; they become desperate and try to seek some solace in wine. Addressing them as "the backbone of the country," the poet demands the need to recognise their services, extend our love and respect towards them as they do different types of things for us which "we can't do":

Lal Salaam to Labour,  
the backbone of the country!  
.....  
for without them we have no life.

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. (WR 44-45)

Dominic's distinctive verse is matchless in the poem "Beauty" where he registers a girl's query to her mother in simple words, "Ma, why didn't God create me a little more beautiful?" Mother in her best way tries to inculcate in her daughter the real meaning of "beauty" in beautiful words, as we read the following lines:

Ma, why didn't God create me a little more beautiful?  
Who told you dear that you are not beautiful?  
Bodily beauty is only one among the beauties;  
It fades and decays as a flower does.

.....

Eternal beauty is in achievements eternal.  
Handsome is he who handsome does.

.....

No child is ugly to its mother;  
Nothing can be ugly, for God created it.

.....

Only spiritual beauty gives eternal joy.  
My dear lass, be like the sun,  
brightening this dark world with your inner beauty. (WR 28)

As we read "Rahul's World" we come across raging theme of thwarting frustration and suppressed violence in an unmistakable manner. Rahul becomes the victim of fury of "teacher" who turns him out of the class for not doing his homework. Unable to interpret "Whose fault" is this, "Poor Rahul" succumbs to the circumstances:

Couldn't study  
yesterday's portion.  
Whose fault?

Drunken father  
beat mother,  
beat Rahul;  
kicked away supper,  
none could sleep.

Cruel father,  
Cruel teacher,  
Cruel world.  
Poor Rahul  
longs for love. (WR 55)

Another poem “What a Birth” counts the uncountable problems of a poor woman whose life is a store house of sufferings. She has no respite from worries as she has to look after her “Bed-ridden mother” and school going “daughter” all alone by herself. Unfortunately, she has to also bear the ire of her “Drunkard husband” who treats her cruelly. Fate has given her nothing else than abject poverty:

A thatched hut  
 cardboard walls  
 boltless door.  
 .....  
 Rice in the pot  
 lunch for ma and daughter  
 stray dogs feasted.  
 .....  
 Dawn for doom  
 Dusk for damn  
 What a birth! (WR 58)

“Helen and Her World” and “Vrinda” are the poems narrating the tales of two intelligent girls crowned with strong will power and courage. “Helen and Her World” describes the tale of a visually challenged girl. She is a very brilliant student and knows the answers of all the questions but the tragedy is that the scribe provided to help her is not as intelligent as she is. The result is that she doesn't win the rank in her degree examination due to his deficient knowledge, which she could have won easily otherwise. The poet presents the great paradox of her life in the following lines:

She is the light of the class,  
 light of the family,  
 light of the village,  
 but alas the light never sees itself (WR 39)

“Vrinda” narrates the story of a physically handicapped girl of “twelve or thirteen”. The poet is enthralled to watch her

“Angelic” “appearance” and wonderful dance “like a peacock” “on the TV”. But the fact of having “only one leg” disturbs his psyche probing the reason behind the injustice to this little soul. Though Vrinda, on her part, defies the “challenge” of being handicapped and sets an example by teaching “the world” a great lesson:

Why is destiny so cruel?  
She illumines this world;  
entertains millions.  
Who can console her?  
Who will comfort her?  
Her life only begun;  
has suffered much.  
Thousands of miles ahead  
to tread with lone leg.  
She turned her challenge  
to strength and success.  
A loud message for the world! (WR 57)

The evil of dowry has been highlighted through the poem “Laxmi’s Plea”. Orphaned at the young age of “ten”, Laxmi has been passing through the ordeals of life one after the other. No one sympathises with her. She has to “bear” the harsh remarks of society like, “Laxmi, when is your wedding?” / “Laxmi, you alone remain” (WR 46). Dowry remains a “stumbling block to all proposals” which she gets for marriage. Unable to meet the demand, she decides to remain “single”:

Plenty of proposals;  
.....  
None complained my looks.  
“What’s the dowry?”  
A stumbling block to all proposals.  
Father died when I was ten;  
mother bed-ridden with cancer;  
a thatched house in five cents;  
.....

My meagre salary two thousand  
 hardly meets our food and medicine.  
 I have pricked my bubble of dreams;  
 let none dream for me.  
 Leave me alone;  
 leave me single. (WR 46-47)

“Anand’s Lot” is a moving poem which describes the sorrowful story of a boy picked up by some anti-social people belonging to a gang of child-pickers. Eyeing some children going to school “in tempting uniforms; / compared with his shabby ragged dress,” Anand reminisces his past happy life: “Many months have passed / since I left my mom, dad and Smitha? / Are they still crying at my loss” (WR 27)? Now Anand’s life is a continuous saga of misery since he has no choice except begging. He narrates his pitiful tale in these words:

I have to sleep in their hut,  
 eat dry bread which I hate;  
 always wear stinky rags.  
 They scold me and beat me  
 for not earning much as they dreamed. (WR 26)

“A Sheep’s Wail”, “Ammini’s Lament” and “Ammini’s Demise” are some poems which depict the inhuman acts of man against animals. In “A Sheep’s Wail”, sheep addresses “Man” as “the cruelest” and “the most ungrateful / of all God’s creations” who gives “false” justifications to his heinous acts. She curses man in these words:

Nothing can be more absurd!  
 Aren’t we His children?  
 How can He forgive you?

If a heaven is there  
 we will reach their first  
 and pray to God to shut you out. (WR 25)

In the poem “Ammini’s Lament,” the poet describes the wailings of his poor cat named Ammini, poignantly suffering “the loss” of its two kittens missing for “ten days”. The mother cat has lost all appetite and continues to “go on wailing.” Ammini’s grief disturbs the poet very much and he wonders for “How long will she go on wailing?”

Ammini can’t forget  
even after ten days  
the loss of her darlings.  
Day in and day out  
she wanders on all sides  
seeking the twins of her triplet.  
.....  
Ammini’s changed a lot;  
no greed for food;  
no frolic with her son.  
How long will she go on wailing?(WR 62-63)

In the subsequent poem “Ammini’s Demise,” we find that Dominic’s grief is prolonged as misfortune falls on Ammini and takes away her life forever. A neighbour of poet poisons Ammini and the poor cat dies “without even a sound”. In a fit of desperation, the poet questions to “God” probing the reasons behind this massacre:

God, why did you  
call her back?  
Lived only one year;  
gave only happiness.  
.....  
How could that fiend  
poison this angel?  
What harm had it  
done to him? (WR 65)

As we go through the poem “Pleasures and Pains” we see that Dominic tries to seek some solace from the vicissitudes of life by taking refuge in philosophical musings:

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. (WR 68)

The poet bemoans the man's apathetic attitude to the world of nature through the poem “I am Just a Mango Tree”. Besides giving oxygen for all living creatures, the mango tree serves the human as well as the animal world equally without any discrimination. The tree reverently entrusts its plea before “God”, the creator, that instead of recognising its service and use, the “selfish” “Man” is heaping only cruelty on it, which is not fair at all. It demands the reason behind this unkindness in the following lines which are really eye-opening:

Don't I do them good as to all?  
 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?  
 Did you create him,  
 to disturb this earth's balance? (WR 41)

“My Teenage Hobby” talks about “Angling” as persona's favorite “pastime”. This is a poem which awakens the empathic consciousness of the protagonist as to have equal concern for all living creatures on earth. “The death struggle / of the innocent fish” which used to provide “Sadistic pleasure” earlier, now looks like “a horrible vision” leaving him “Awestruck and

repentant” (WR 48). He now decides to shun this activity forever:

No more did I angle;  
Reflections on life  
became my pastime. (WR 48)

The poem “How I Became a Vegetarian” is a wonderful example of the soul preaching the self-consciousness of the poet. Dominic is successful in depicting the musings on existence in the journey of life transforming himself from a non-vegetarian to “a pure vegetarian”. We notice a feeling of compunction in his lyrics:

My mind used to taunt me;  
“Hey Mister, incongruous  
are your words and actions;  
what do you write and teach?  
The relation between  
Man and Nature and God;  
human beings and other beings,  
all children of God;  
Man has no right  
to torture any other being.  
Hey mister, have you no shame  
to eat the flesh of  
innocent animals and fish?”  
Born a Christian,  
lived a non-veg life;  
believed the teachings  
that man is the centre of universe;  
God made other beings  
for his food and assistance.  
.....  
my eyes are opened at last  
and I have become  
a pure vegetarian. (WR, 76)

To sum up, Dominic's *Winged Reason* is a wonderful collection of lyrics through which he accentuates on the need to reawaken the lost consciousness and instill a spirit of humanism in all human beings so that this world becomes a better place to live in. His lyrics have the strength which finally pushes the readers on the path of self-introspection.

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**The Pen is Mightier than the Sword:  
Reading Prof. K.V. Dominic's  
Poetry as the Flaming Spirit**

**Dr. Trayee Sinha**

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Indian English writing, for several decades, has expanded its repertoire in a way it could reflect all the aspects of the society. The field of Indian Writing in English has been enriched with the writers who have been relentlessly trying to depict the true picture of India in different ways. Indian English Writing is classified on the basis of the works by different generations of writers and authors of Indian origin. The first generation mainly consists of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K Narayan and Raja Rao. In the following generations many novelists, poets, travelogue writers have created immense effect with their works. Prof. K.V Dominic is an acclaimed poet who has written poems on each and every aspect of our country in various ways. Prof. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya has made a very significant observation regarding the poet's works:

Dominic's poetry, unlike much of our poetry today, speaks of high moral values that are at the core Indian and that could be emulated by other cultures also. Moral values, in order to be practicable, need a grasp on the economic, political and social condition of the society under study. It also needs a comprehensive grasp on the

philosophy, on the background of which the socially aware poetry could be composed. (Mukhopadhyaya 1)

Prof. K. V. Dominic constructs his poems on the solid foundations of everlasting ethical values and human considerations such as essential sympathetic understanding and tolerance which has transformed his poems into unfading flowers spreading the balmy breeze of their fragrance to distant lands and territories (Reddy, Foreword iv).

Prof. T. V. Reddy in his Foreword to the book *K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide* has made certain important observations which give the readers an opportunity to think of the poet in terms of his creative intellect. His views on Prof. Dominic's poem 'Victory to Thee Mother India' is significant to follow. Here the poet thinks of the following lines where he explores his self in the form of a tribute to his motherland:

Victory to thee Mother India;  
For you did unite the races  
Divided on religion  
culture, language and colour

The poet had deep philosophical understanding of each and every object he viewed. On one hand he pays homage to his motherland, on the other how can we forget his deep pain which is expressed in his elegy for his friend and colleague George Josen. A point of similarity can be found in Tennyson's love for his friend Arthur Henry Hallam and Prof. Dominic's feelings for his friend and colleague.

*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* brilliantly expresses Prof. Dominic, the poet's concern for the surroundings which has a wide range of topics beginning from problems, tortures and tragedies of the marginalised like beggars, transgender, the old, issues of war and peace, nature, environment, tribute to farmers and soldiers, philosophical thoughts, karma, spirituality,

social issues and criticism and many more. The poet has adopted a poetic style of his own and has never tried to imitate any predecessor or contemporary poet.

I want to express my concern through his writings which enlightened me in a way that it encompasses a host of ideas which is not restricted to one particular subject – it has multiplicity of subjects. The poet took 18 months to write 38 poems of this collection from 2014. His feelings can be traced from his following words: “Variety is one of the charms of my poetry and I have dealt with innumerable topics and incidents in this collection” (Dominic, Preface, 5)

The present paper attempts to reflect the works of Prof. Dominic to assess the multiplicity of subjects in his writings and how those subjects truly mirror the society. Selected poems have been taken from *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* to dwell on various themes of his poems. “An Airport Made of Tears” is the poet’s protest against the construction of Aranmula International Airport. The poem expresses his concern for the village Aranmula and his attempt to save the village and the hamlets surrounding it from the “modernisation” of the village by demolishing it and by building up an airport. Aranmula is a Hindu heritage village, internationally known for Parthasarathy temple. The construction of an airport may benefit many people in various ways but what about the beauty of Nature that will be destroyed in its own ways? The poet talks about how such a construction could affect the biodiversity. This is not the end of the problem. The local inhabitants will be affected in various ways; they will be evicted and shifted to a separate place which may also bring identity crisis in them.

Such a project could also affect the temple as a heritage sight. The poet’s clarion call to general readers, professors and

people of different sections of society made an impact on the public opinion and the decision of the government. That is how he has beautifully and effectively made the proverb true that pen is mightier than the sword. The poem was composed on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and recited at the main auditorium of Pondicherry Central University on 20<sup>th</sup> March of 2014. Dr. Dominic took part in the mass protest at Aranmula against the project and recited the poem there. The project was cancelled in 2015 since the Supreme Court of India ratified the order of National Green Tribunal Verdict declaring Aranmula Airport Project as violating all environmental requirements. Consequently Govt. of India withdrew its sanction of the airport. This is how Prof. Dominic nurtures his thoughts, and thus giving it a concrete shape, he actually resists such a project which could affect life and Nature in its own ways. One could trace the following lines to feel the poet's pain regarding the demolishing of the village:

Fake development policy of the State  
 Dancing to tunes of billionaire corporate  
 An airport totally unnecessary  
 Two international airports on either side  
 Two hours drive will take you there  
 Selfish discontent inhumane millionaires  
 insist on flying from the poor's chest....

“Child Trafficking” expresses the poet's awareness for the heinous crime people commit by trafficking the children. “Children taken from their homes and sold in markets just like cows or goats” truly expresses the live picture of trafficking. The poet has focused on the theme of sexual and physical-mental abuse of children. It can be traced through the following words:

Sexual exploitation from the tender age of five....  
 Forty thousand children abducted in India every year.

In the changing world women's safety is one of the significant issues addressed by different writers, activists, people in general in different ways. When we think of the earth we imagine her to be a woman. The poem "I Can Hear the Groan of the Mother Earth" reveals the pain of the mother as well as the pain of a woman because she is "violated" by the plunderers. How realistically the poet expresses his grievance when he says:

I can hear the groan of mother earth  
being raped by her own beloved human sons

He feels ashamed of the inhabitants of the earth because they "pluck her hair after hair / felling trees and plants which protect them". The earth, imagined in the form of a woman with her offsprings (birds, trees, animals) is endangered and the poet "can hear the death cry of bird after bird / when they cut their feeding trees". Thus the poet points out the root cause of the loss of ecological balance as a consequence of the "violation" of the mother earth.

The study of Prof. Dominic's poem "None is Born Free" reminds one of Rousseau's words, "Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains". The poet has re-fashioned Rousseau's expression by saying the following lines:

Man is never born free  
Born with the genes  
of his ancestors

In this world it is quite difficult to anticipate a person's nature and this idea is justified by the poet: "How can one predict / one's trait and character?" It takes a whole life to know someone.

The issue of the transgender is quite sensitive and is addressed by the poet in his poem "Transgender". The

transgender identities are treated as outcasts by most of the people in our society. The poet's concern and sympathy for such identities are clearly reflected in this poem. He talks about Kiran Sakhi, a post graduate in computer science who was appointed as a techie in spite of the fact that she was a third gender. "She was bold enough to tell the world her sex". The same authority asked her to quit the job after sometime "for reasons unreasonable". Then Prof. Dominic robustly places the question of Kiran in front of his readers, "Is it offence or sin revealing one's identity?" Individuals like Kiran are trapped in a nexus of gender identity and then where is their destination? Ostracised by the society

they are the lot destined to choose sex work  
or beg on streets to appease their hunger.

Such incidents recur and the number is increasing day by day. What could be more painful?

"Tribute to Siachen Martyrs" expresses the poet's concern for the soldiers who go to the battlefield but never come back. "Thus sacrificed his life for the nation along with / nine others in Siachen Glacier at Indo-Pak border / Were buried under thirty feet huge avalanche". How many of us memorise those soldiers? Prof. Dominic's poem gave us opportunity to think of those soldiers who relentlessly sacrificed their lives for the security of our country.

*K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide: Poems about Social Justice, Women's Rights and the Environment* opens a new horizon of Prof. Dominic's poetry, edited by Victor R. Volkman. Three books are compiled in it. Book 1 is entitled *Winged Reason*. In the Preface of this book, Prof. Dominic acknowledges the fact that he is always inspired by the poetry of Robert Browning. He gives priority to the content of a poem

than to the style of language. It is significant to point out that whether it is Book 1 or 2 or 3, the major theme of his poetry is the eternal relationship between Man, Nature and God.

His poems in Book 1 – *Winged Reason* can be categorised into different ways and each of the poems bear individual significance. It is a collection of poems by Prof. Dominic about losses including ultimate loss which is the most unrelenting and grimmest loss of human life. It seems, as pointed out by the editor, that the poet has experienced those losses himself or has heard closely the cries of the bearers of such losses. The poet does not hesitate to attack wherever he finds injustice. His prime concerns include hollow rituals, inhumanity, exploitation in every shape.

He opines that animals are the close companions of our first parents and such idea is reflected in his poems such as “A Sheep’s Wail”, “I am Just a Mango Tree”, “My Teenage Hobby”. The poems like “A Nightmare”, “Anand’s Lot”, “Beauty”, “International Women’s Day” reveal the themes such as disparities in society, problems of the poor, the downtrodden, the marginalised and the old.

The present day society is full of tyranny, jealousy, hypocrisy etc. Prof. Dominic has always raised his voice against the atrocities of society. The poems like “A Blissful Voyage”, “Gods Will be Pleased”, “Indian Democracy”, “Solar Eclipse” are significant of the issues like politics, terrorism, corruption, exploitation by political parties and religion. Description of Nature is found in the poems like “Nature’s Bounties”, “Harvest Feast”, “Cuckoo Singing”, “Onam” and “Sleepless Nights”. The contrast of city and village lives is the theme of “City Versus Village”. The ebb and flow of happiness and sorrow is the theme of the poem “Pleasures and Pains”. His poem “Human

Brain” is a poem drawing comparison of human brain with animal brain.

‘In Memoriam George Joson’ bears an elegiac note and the poem bears resemblance with what Tennyson wrote for his friend Arthur Henry Hallam commemorating his death. Joson died in a car accident on 14.5.2004. “Your absence, everywhere is haunting / we find it hard / to console and reconcile / with the inevitable”. Human beings are social animals and therefore they get attached with other people. Joson was Prof. Dominic’s colleague and friend. His death created huge impact and he felt an urge to write an elegy and dedicate it to his friend who is no more.

‘Tsunami Camps’ expresses the poet’s deepest grief for the victims of Tsunami. Such a disaster brought immense loss to life and property. We are living in an era when everything is more or less controlled by human beings. But the natural calamities are still beyond the reach of the humans and we are still lacking the ability to resist such natural calamities which could even wipe out an entire civilisation. The Uttarakhand disaster is clearly indicative of that. The poet’s mind was pre-occupied with the thought of those people who were in the Tsunami relief camp: “Where have gone the crores / collected for our relief”? Even in this emergency situation people took advantage and they collected money in the name of Tsunami victims and spent it to their own purposes. That is why the poet asks such question. Does the aid fund truly reach to the victims? At the same time the poet has also expressed his concern for the health and hygiene of the victims who were living in the camps. “The filthy atmosphere of the camp / will bring several epidemics” – such a situation cannot ensure good health to the victims of the camp.

‘Indian Democracy’ is written to harp on the true condition of the democratic rights which people are supposed to enjoy.

Indian democracy:  
the largest on the planet;  
a wonder to the world

This is very true but the poet finds “secularism butchered” and “The real issues of the country / never discussed among people”. The concept of true democracy is becoming blurred day by day and unhesitatingly the poet has unveiled the truth. How many of us can truly participate in the decision making of the country by casting our votes? Fair selections are becoming impossible day by day. “Thus democracy reigns / drinking tears of thousands” is very much realistic. “Still democracy shall reign / or tyranny will / sit on the chair.” The poet bears his responsibility of finding out the meaning of true democracy in his own ways and he also intends to deliver this message to his fellow citizens.

*Cataracts of Compassion* is the poet’s collection of 34 poems published in 2017. This title was inspired by the poet-philosopher Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. The poems philosophize, rationalise and spiritualise the various concepts discussed by the poet. ‘Enlighten Us Lord Buddha’ is the poet’s humble prayer to Lord Buddha to provide us spiritual enlightenment so that we can properly perform our duties on this earth. He invokes Lord Buddha who has attained spiritualism and it is the poet’s belief that by doing this we can try to attain the same. His idea is expressed in the following words:

You are the sun among  
all the stars of seers who  
lived on this planet  
Lord Buddha, you are

most purified man  
born on earth

In another part of the poem the poet interestingly dwells on divinity established by Lord Buddha

You have proved through life  
divinity of human beings  
how ennobled  
can human birth be

Such philosophical renderings grant the readers an opportunity to delve deep into the inner philosophy of life that nobody could escape the pallor of death but one could perform his/her earthly duties properly until one lives on this earth. That can be the way of achieving salvation.

'Endosulfan Tragedy' is the poet's concern for his fellow countrymen who have suffered the curse of this highly controversial agrichemical which is

Notorious for acute toxicity and bioaccumulation  
Highly potential endocrine disruptor  
The State owned Plantation Corporation of Kerala  
sprayed thousands of litres of toxin  
.....  
Children are born with cleft palates  
Neurobehavioural disorders

It is the poet's protest to raise his voice against the practice of spraying this venomous chemical which has been banned by more than eighty countries including India but the people of more than eleven villages in Kasargod district are the worst sufferers. The poet wants to claim justice for them.

'Housemaid's Dreams' is an account of the downtrodden section of people in our society. The poem narrates the story of Debopriya, a maid from Bengal who came to Kerala in search of job and became a baby sitter. The poet is deeply sympathetic

and he raises the question which haunts the minds of thousands of maids like Debopriya: does she get a life of comfort and honour? There has always been a distinction between the rich and the poor. The rich people in more or less every society become richer and the poor remains poor. Will this situation ever be changed?

The evil of caste system is evident in 'Irrational Discriminations'. Down through the ages we practice caste system and the society is built on hierarchy. A person is by birth either a higher or a lower caste but he/she is not personally responsible for this. 'I can't live with low caste Sudras, Brahmin says' gives an account of the class distinction system of society. It reveals the poet's concern for the untouchable who are discriminated, tortured and till death they bear the pain of being an 'untouchable'. While going through Prof. Dominic's concerns about untouchability we can also think of Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable* which has addressed this issue. Similar references can also be brought from contemporary times such as the novel *Jhoothan* by Om Prakash Valmiki. Prof. Dominic's work has maintained the continuity of exploring such social problems.

In the poem "Medha Patkar and Narmada Bachao Andolan" the poet talks about Medha Patkar's struggle and fight for three decades

for theeconomic, political rights of tribals  
dalits, farmers, labourers and women

The poet has also pointed out Patkar's devotion to serve the underprivileged. She fought against Sardar Sarovar Dam Project. Dropping her Ph. D work, she led protest marches, hunger strikes and satyagrahas and what becomes truly evident is that

Her fast for twenty two days forced World Bank  
to study the issues and found clear violations  
World Bank cancelled its financial participation

This is how the poet's admiration for an activist like Medha Patkar is expressed through this poem. He is concerned about every nook and corner of the society. On the other hand the poet could not remain silent when the incidents like the murder of Gauri Lankesh or M. M. Kalburgi and his protest came out in the following words:

One has right to express one's opinion  
freely without any fear through  
oral/written/electronic/broadcasting/press  
.....

Gauri Lankesh, journalist aged 55  
shot down yesterday while  
entering into her house at Bangalore  
Renowned writers and activists  
Narendra Davolkar, Govind Pansare,  
M. M. Kalburgi were dispatched  
similarly in 2013, 15 and 16  
They were all silenced for speaking  
against superstition and communalism

(“Murder of Freedom of Expression”)

The present age is an age of tyranny, hypocrisy, communalism, avarice, lustfulness and the feeling of brotherhood is becoming extinct. A reader can find almost all such issues in Prof. Dominic's works in which he has talked about both sensitive and serious issues. The poet raises certain questions at the end of this poem which can also be the question of the readers:

How can democracy survive  
when intolerance charges like monster?  
Isn't duty of democratic governments  
to protect the lives of their guardian angels?

Thus Prof. Dominic's poems continuously question a reader about the philosophy of life. The problems related to human beings are increasing day by day. We feel quite restless and it is becoming difficult for us to control our nerves. In this situation Prof. Dominic's poems give us mental solace. The poems work as mouthpiece of the society. An Academician from the early years of his life, Prof. Dominic has seen life from very close quarters and has jotted down more or less all of his first hand experiences in the form of his writings. That is why his works are so close to life. Readers of any background can follow his poems and in a way the writer is best identified in his/her works. Prof. Dominic will always be known to us through his creation.

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**A Stylistic Approach to the Selected  
Poems of K. V. Dominic**

**Dr. S. Barathi**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Indian English poetry is rich and varied in its theme and structure. Stylistics is applied to literary pieces to understand the view of the writer and also a particular form used by the writer to promote his ideas. Moreover using the linguistic tools to analyse a text provides additional information about the text. K. V. Dominic is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Indian Poet, Short story writer, Editor and Critic, hailing from Kerala. In this paper, the researcher has tried to examine K. V. Dominic's poems from stylistics' point. The main objective of the analysis is to develop the knowledge of the working language with literary text through distinctive features. S. K. Verma and N. Krishnaswamy consider stylistics as "a way of doing something ... implicit in the view of style is ... distinction between what is done and how" (352).

**BACKGROUND STUDIES**

The Oxford dictionary defines stylistics as "The study of the distinctive styles found in particular literary genres and in the works of individual writers" ("Stylistics: Definition"). The

reason for choosing Stylistics is its accommodating property and multidisciplinary approach towards language and literature. In other words, its openness promotes addition to the present knowledge as the findings are never ultimate. Jakobson modeled a systematic framework to analyse the signifier-signified relationship involving tension between the axes of language. According to him, “for poetry, metaphor and for prose metonymy is the line of least resistance ...” (Jakobson and Halle 95). He further moves on to state that logical meaning in the poem is linked with phonemic, rhythmic similarities and parallels (qtd. in Barry 37). Carter describes it as a “process of literary text analysis which starts from a basic assumption that the primary interpretative procedures used in the reading of a literary text are linguistic procedures” (4) and this kind of practical approach is used to analyse the text.

### **SUMMARY OF THE SELECTED POEMS**

There are four poems selected from the anthology *Winged Reason* titled “A Blissful Voyage”, “Sheep’s Wail”, “Anand’s Lot” and “My Teenage Hobby” for analysis.

The poem “A Blissful Voyage” is a 22 lined imaginary poem in free verse with irregular rhythm. It is about the poet’s various fancies. In the first part of the poem, the poet conveys the readers his wishes to fly like a bird to the U.S. and shake his hands with Obama and be friendly with the American men and women whom he addresses brothers and sisters. This reminds one of Swami Vivekananda’s Chicago address, where he addressed the fellow Americans as brothers and sisters.

In the next part, the scene of ambience changes to that of harshness, where the poet wishes to get the claws of a vulture to fetch the skeletons from Iraq and imprison Bush in that. This portrays the poet’s anguish towards the inhuman attitude of the

politician. The next wish of the poet is to meet the Prophets and plead them to instil humanism in mankind. The poet finally concludes the poem with his wish to be a bullet that pierces the terrorist. He prefers to be the bullet that kills because these terrorists threaten and brainwash innocent children and make them suicide bombs.

“Anands Lot” is also a poem in free verse. Here, he describes the plight of a child separated from his family and is compelled to beg. The poet names the child as “Anand” a commonly used Indian name to refer to a child who wonders if he could join his family. This is not quite uncommon in a highly populated country like India, where many lazy goons make business by abducting children and pushing them to beg on the streets. The poem, written in third person promulgates the voice of a hapless child nostalgic of his past happy life with his parents, siblings and friends. He is now brought to reality by the coarse voice of his master who forces him to beg on the street. This is a realistic poem that portrays the pangs of the young boy who longs to reunite with his family.

The poem “A Sheep’s Wail” is in the voice of a wretched animal, a sheep that complains against humans who use all their products and later mercilessly kill them. The sheep as a small lamb had witnessed its parents being butchered by humans. The poet raises a question in the voice of the animal to make the readers think about the cruelty meted out to these animals.

“My Teenage Hobby” is an autobiographical poem in which the poet tells the readers about his teenage hobby, i.e. angling. Here, the poet explains how he along with his friend used to wait to catch fishes till late evenings, amidst the biting mosquitoes. He describes the thrill of catching the fishes but all of a sudden it dawns on him how he would struggle for life,

which made him feel repentant and though it was his favourite hobby, now he does not indulge in such action. This proves that the poet is a humanist to the core, who is compassionate even to the lowest creatures.

All the poems taken for analysis have the theme of man's inhuman attitude towards animals. They also have the theme of exploitation of the voiceless in the society. The poet is full of compassion for such creations on earth. The poems again focus on the theme of compassion towards others including animals. It also highlights the evils of the society which must come to an end.

## **STYLISTIC ANALYSIS**

### **Syntax**

Syntax refers to the arrangement of words in a sentence that make sense and also refers to the rules on how words and phrases collocate in a sentence. The syntax in the lines "Hark, you man / to my wail, / your enslaved sheep's" and "mercilessly you sheer" (24) and "How happy were those days!" (26) represents a deviation from the normal. The poet in order to intensify the mood has deviated from the normal structure. There are many such examples of syntactic peculiarities and deviations in Dominic's poems.

### **Parallelism**

Parallelism is the usage of repeating words and forms to give pattern and rhythm to a passage in literature. The definition of parallelism can also refer to a grammatical construct. One could find this in poems "A Blissful Voyage" where the poet uses the phrases "If I were" and "I wish" repeatedly in alternate stanzas.

### Use of Superlatives

The poet has used superlative words to highlight the amount of torture of humans. The best example is “A Sheep’s Wail” where the lines “Man, you are the cruelest / you are the most ungrateful / of God’s creations” (25) details the magnitude of suffering undergone by the beast.

### Foregrounding

Foregrounding is a technique that highlights the choice and prominence given by the poet through a certain linguistic pattern projected in the text with an expected effect. It focuses on the meaning of the text as intended by the poet. For instance the poem lines from “A Blissful Voyage” and “A Sheep’s Wail” are given below:

“I wish I were a bullet / and shoot into the chest of the terrorist”  
(21)

“Man you are the cruelest, / you are the most ungrateful / of all  
God’s creations” (25)

In the lines above, the first one demonstrates the angst of the poet as he raises his voice against terrorism. It conveys the readers the poet’s wish to end terrorism. In the second one the poet uses superlatives purposely to show how barbarous and inhumane people are.

### Questioning

The poet uses rhetorical questions like “Aren’t we His children?” and “How can we forgive you?” (25) in “A Sheep’s Wail”. In the poem “Vrinda” the lines such as “The other leg? / Folded under skirt? / ... / who can console her? / Who will comfort her?” (57) demonstrate the shocking reality realised by the poet and hence raises such questions. In “Ammini’s Lament”, in the final

lines “How long will she go on wailing? / Will she curse me as Gandhari did?” (59) the poet uses a rhetorical question alluding to the mythological character from Mahabharata.

### **Punctuation**

In the poems “A Blissful Voyage” and “My Teenage Hobby” it plays a vital role in cohesion and coherence of the poems. For instance in the lines from “A Blissful Voyage”, “I could fly to the States, / shake hands with Obama, / and thank my American sisters and brothers” (21) the punctuation is used not just as a pause but also serves as a cohesive device and connects to the next lines of the stanza.

### **Phonology**

The various phonological devices include alliteration, assonance and assonance.

### **Alliteration**

It is the repetition of the same consonant sounds at the beginning of words that are in close proximity to each other. This repetition of consonant sounds brings attention to the lines in which it is used, and creates more aural rhythm. In “Anand’s Lot” the lines “bearded-man...black towel”, “hushed my helpless wail for help”, “many months” (26) are instances for alliteration. In “A Nightmare” the lines “I was a hawk hovering in the sky” there is the repetition of the consonant ‘h’ and in the lines “Luxury rooms, lawn and swimming pool;... the siren sounded as usual (23) there is a repetition of ‘l’ sound (23). In the line “I wish I were a bullet” from the poem “A Blissful Voyage” (21) there is the repetition of the consonant ‘w’. In “A Nightmare” (23) the line “siren sounded as usual” has the repetition of the consonant sound ‘s’. In the line “where poor

women wait for their rations” from the poem “A Nightmare” (22) there is the repetition of the consonant sound ‘w’.

### **Assonance**

It is the repetition of vowel sounds in a line. In the line “Let my mind soar high” in the poem “A Blissful Voyage” (21) there is the repetition of the vowel sound ‘ai’. Again in the line “If I could fly like an angel” in the poem “A Blissful Voyage” (21) there is the repetition of the vowel sound ‘ai’. In the line “Beating him to eat more” in the poem “A Nightmare” (22) there is the repetition of the vowel sound ‘ee’. In the line “Tears streamed down from Anand’s cheeks” in the poem “Anand’s Lot” (27) there is the repetition of the vowel sound ‘ee’. The line “They scold me and beat me” in “Anand’s Lot” (26) has again the repetition of the vowel sound ‘e’.

### **Consonance**

Consonance is the repetition of a consonant sound in stressed syllables in the middle or at the end of words. In the line “and shoot into the chest of that terrorist” from the poem “A Blissful Voyage” (21) there is the repetition of the consonant ‘t’. In the line “whose mother was beating him to eat more” from the poem “A Nightmare” (23) there is the repetition of the consonant ‘t’ and ‘r’.

### **Rhyme Scheme**

There is no definite rhyme scheme followed in the selected poems. In the poem “A Bissful Voyage” the first, second and final stanzas have end rhyme with words such as “muses, places and states, brothers and sisters, bullet, terrorist” which are rhyming. The other three poems do not have end rhyme.

## **Imagery**

Many of the images are visual images such as in the poem “Blissful Voyage” where one finds “wings of mallard”, “bone-palace” and “claws of vulture”. In “Sheep’s Wail” images of touch like “The fur”, image of taste “The Milk” has been identified.

## **Simile**

It is a comparison using words such as “like” and “as”. In “A Blissful Voyage” the poet has used the simile “like an angel”, “like butterflies flew to the school”, “Like a vulture came the car then;” (21), in “A Nightmare” the poet compares the people lined up before the liquor shop through the following line: “like a line of ants before their holes” (22)

## **Metaphor**

Metaphor is a figure of speech containing an implied comparison. In “A Nightmare”, the poet considers himself as “a hawk hovering in the sky” (22). The image of hawk is always related to negative things, but here the poet appears to use it to do something good to humanity. In the poem “A Blissful Voyage” the poet wishes to be a bullet “I wish I were a bullet” (21).

## **Colloquialism**

The word “colloquialism” comes from the Latin colloquium, which means a “conference” or “conversation.” The line “Mummy gave me kiss and ta-ta” (26) from the poem “Anand’s Lot”, the word “ta-ta” is a colloquial term used to bid bye or farewell to someone. In this poem, the boy’s mother bids bye to her child who is leaving to school.

### **Repetition**

There are various types of repetition in a text like anaphora, where a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of several subsequent lines. For example in the lines from "A Nightmare", "grandpa, grandma, their sons and their wives" (23) are instances of anaphora.

### **Mesodilopsis**

In Mesodilopsis, a word is repeated in the middle of every line or clause. In "Sheep's Wail", the lines "superior you boast / but inferior you become", "mercilessly you sheer / to make you cosy", "you suck and drain / and grow fat and cruel" (24) have repeated words. Further the phrases "I have seen with my eyes / and heard with my ears", "you cut their heads / and ate their flesh" (24) also has repeat of the word "their".

### **Juxtaposition**

The poet juxtaposes the images of "pupils in tempting uniforms" and "with his ragged dress" (26) in "Anand's Lot", whereas in "A Teenage Hobby" he explains how a pleasure for someone could turn out to be a great pain for someone else "a heavenly experience / ... / sadistic pleasure" (48).

### **Ellipsis**

In the poem "My Teenage Hobby" the verses are highly terse, as it does not use conjunctions like "and," "or," or "because." However, it still retains the clarity of its meaning. The reader has to connect the two phrases, but ellipsis allows this to be done easily.

## CONCLUSION

The poems in this collection focus on the society, and demonstrates humanist attitude of the writer. Besides it also shows the author as a socialist who wants equality in the society. Also his poems emboss *advaita* philosophy of life. Through the analysis of selected poems, it is apparent that the poet uses almost no rhyme with an occasional simile or metaphor. Even the poet does not care to use imagery or other literary devices to embellish his work. However, a handful of literary devices props up here and there which is unintentional. All these prove that the poet wants to foreground the stark realities and bitter truths of life.

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**Nature and the Animal World in  
K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion***

**Prof. Elisabetta Marino**

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As well as being a highly reputed scholar and editor, K. V. Dominic is an extremely prolific writer, the author of numerous poems and short stories. As he stated in the *Preface* to his 2016 poetry collection entitled *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*, he has “adopted a poetic style of [his] own” (5), thus refusing to imitate any previous or contemporary artist. Far from indulging in the use of sophisticated images and complex rhyming patters, Dominic has opted for a simple and unpretentious poetic style, which appeals to both the average reader and the expert; indeed, despite the natural elegance of his lines, the message he wishes to convey to his wide and varied readership appears to be his primary concern. In his view, poetry is entrusted with a crucial social mission and a major responsibility: it has to “instruct’ and ‘delight” (Prem 2); in a 2016 interview, he further expanded on this concept by observing that “when religious and political leaders and intelligentsia fail to inject values into the masses, only poets who are like prophets, can save this planet and its inhabitants from imminent devastation” (Marino 211). It is not surprising, therefore, that the difficulties of marginalised groups and minorities (too often overlooked by the relevant authorities),

as well as environmental and animal-rights issues are forcefully addressed in a large number of his poems.

By focusing on *Cataracts of Compassion*, Dominic's latest collection of poems released in 2017, this paper sets out to emphasize the importance attached by the author to the harmonious relationship between man and the natural environment, as a necessary condition for a worthy and fulfilled life. As will be shown, most crises and social problems seem to arise from the artificial separation between humankind and nature, stemming from the false and egotistical assumption that, "man is the centre of universe and God has created the earth for his existence" (Marino 211), quoting Dominic's words. Conversely, the poet seems to foster a renewed and lasting union with the natural world, including animals (whose stories are filled with moral lessons): only when the profound affinity between all God's creatures is acknowledged and cherished, only when every living being is treated with the same respect, only when compassion (one of the key words of the collection) turns into a necessity, can peace be restored to our iniquitous, conflict-ridden, and divided world.

The very title of the anthology, *Cataracts of Compassion*, is aimed at establishing a strong connection between the feeling of sympathy and the natural world, exemplified by the cataracts, powerful waterfalls that symbolise life and regeneration. The yearning for a rejuvenated humankind, newly capable of embracing the simple – albeit essential – pleasures of existence, is featured in the poem entitled "Nostalgia for Childhood". Reminiscent of the British Romantic writers, Dominic longs for the long-lost "golden days" (*Cataracts* 53) of his youth, since "only innocent childhood savours Nature's happiness / children find all beings their equals and companions / they feel excited when drenched and sweated" (53). Conversely, our modern life-

style pushes even the youngest creatures to be so tied to their precious belongings (53) that they do not even realise how much they are missing of a more complete and joyful human existence: “compared to my childhood happiness / my children could enjoy only ten percent / and my grandson is denied total happiness” (53). The poem ends with poignant ecological concerns: the natural world has been thoughtlessly exploited and perverted by men. Hence, we are responsible for our own fall from the state of bliss we used to experience: “haven't we destroyed nature and environment / and made uncongenial for our children to survive?” (53).

A similar anxiety is expressed in another poem meaningfully entitled “I Can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth”. The planet we live in, the selfless mother that continues to nurture and feed her treasured offspring has been “raped by her own beloved human sons” (41), who despoil and plunder her sacred body without thinking that, one day, their selfishness and short-sightedness will be the cause of their own ruin. Consequently, her “shriek for help / when they cut each her vein / and drain all brooks and rivers” (41), her excruciating wail, “when they pluck her hair after hair / felling trees and plants which protect them” (41) are turned by Dominic into a curse that, eventually, will blast and wither Mother Earth's hideous progeny. As the final lines of the poem reveal, “Man, I can hear mother earth cursing you / as Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna” (41). Climate changes and their disastrous effects on agriculture and water resources are the subject of “No Balm Can Cure Nature's Wounds”, where the poet openly condemns “greedy money minded mafias” (52), who have unwisely destroyed forests and woods “to create concrete buildings and township”, to make room for unplanned and stifling jungles of cement.

Drawing on newspaper and magazine articles, several poems in the collection tackle other man-caused environmental problems faced by the Indian Subcontinent. The Sardar Sarovar Dam Projects (actually “drowning houses of the poor with none to question” (48) are hinted at in “Medha Patkar and Narmada Bachavo Andolan”. In “Endosulfan Tragedy”, Dominic delves into the catastrophic effects on “human beings, flora and fauna” (34) of the pesticides sprayed by the “State-owned Plantation Corporation of Kerala” (34) on the cultivated fields of the region, hoping to rid them of tea mosquito bugs: “Around four thousand people died / health of more than 900 persons impaired” (34). The partial victory over a Coca-Cola Company manufactory plant located in Kerala (whose license was withdrawn in 2017) is recorded in “Victory of Fight for Water”, a poem which, nonetheless, ends with dark and ominous lines:

The villagers' problems still continue  
groundwater remains polluted  
they get drinking water through pipes and trucks  
supplied only a few hours once in two days  
their legal fight still goes on  
demanding compensation for damage  
caused to health and the environment. (64)

The only antidote to despair and self-destruction seems to be provided by a renewed sense of spirituality and a desire for moral guidance. Yet, even though the author was raised as a Christian, his compassionate respect for all fellow creatures coupled with his aversion to partiality and fundamentalisms prompt him to find God in all his creatures, regardless of their origin, status, gender, or religious belief. In truth, as he confessed to Goutam Karmakar in a 2017 interview, he “deem[s] all religions equal. In fact [his] religion is universal religion, which preaches to love all creations of the world and

show discrimination to none” (Karmakar 6). The poem entitled “What is Spirituality?”, therefore, deserves to be quoted in full:

What is Spirituality?  
 worshipping God  
 in abstract terms  
 and spending time  
 in temples, mosques  
 churches, synagogues  
 gurudwaras etc. or  
 doing real services  
 through words and actions  
 to your fellow beings  
 including non-human  
 and plant world?  
 Methinks God likes  
 the latter and  
 loathes the former. (66)

K. V. Dominic's appreciative interest in the animal world has been highlighted in more than one interview. In his opinion, in fact, “Man can learn many values from animals: love, kindness, friendship, cooperation, industry, cleanliness, etc.” (Marino 211); as he further remarks, he believes “non-human beings are dearer to God than human beings because they don't sin against Him. They move with perfect rhythm to His eternal symphony” (Marino 211). What is more, in the artist's view “no other Indian poet in English has dealt with as deeply as [him] the issu[e] of cruelty to animals” (Karmakar 4). The value he attaches to animals is evident in an autobiographical poem featured in *Cataracts of Compassion*, ironically entitled “What's Wrong with me?”; in its bitter-sweet lines, he responds to those (including his spouse) who deem his behaviour odd and excessive, since he seems unable to start his dinner before feeding his pets: “but I can't eat when / their stomachs are empty / is it fault treating animals / on a par with humans?”

(*Cataracts* 67). At times, however, animals prove to be more humane and ethical than their human counterparts; consequently, they are often taken as models. In “Musings on the Killing of a Tiger”, while the giant feline kills “a few cattle for just its survival” (51), vicious and covetous men, who have even destroyed its natural habitat and sources of sustenance, stone the wild creature to death out of a sheer thirst for revenge. Rosy the dog (the protagonist of “Rosy Dog is Waiting”), whose house has been wiped out by a landslide together with its dwellers, after many days still waits for her master to return, even refusing the food offered by merciful neighbours; as Dominic sadly observes, Rosy’s pure love and loyalty to its family clashes against the insolent indifference too many children nowadays feel towards their parents, perceived as a burden when they become too old to provide for their offspring and themselves: “How ungrateful are present offspring’s! / Parents become burden when they are old! / Long and pray for their earliest death / or discard them to streets or old age homes!” (57).

In other poems, the author even adopts the perspective of an animal speaking in the first person, thus managing once more to voice the feelings of the marginalised and oppressed, often doomed to remain shrouded in silence. In “Wails of Mosquitoes and Elephants”, the latter grieve for the lack of food and water, while men are held responsible for ruining thousands of lives:

Pastures and thickets are burnt  
 Neither is there any water  
 Our habitats are destroyed  
 Roads are made through them  
 Vehicles hit us and kill  
 Their horns pierce our ears  
 Hunger’s call leads us to your farms  
 that were once our pastures. (65)

In “Dog’s Curse on Human Beings” a dog depicts human beings as “the most selfish / ungrateful and cruelest / of all creations on this planet” (32); indeed, as the fictional animal notices, men proved to be deeply unfair in ordering the slaughter of all stray dogs, just because a few of them, stirred by hunger, had attacked some passers-by: “Compared to our violators / multitudinous are your / criminals and murderers / Do you kill them all / as you mercilessly butcher / roads after roads?” (32-33). The poem ends with the dog reminding men of the role they play on this planet, a role which is far from essential; accordingly, the animal claims the right on the part of all living creatures to share mother Nature’s bounty: “We too have a right / as all other animals have / to live and share / [this world’s] sustaining wealth” (33).

To conclude, as a close reading of *Cataracts of Compassion* tried to demonstrate, poetry can be usefully employed as an effective balm to ease the pain (if not to heal) of a planet devastated by wars, religious contrasts, natural catastrophes, and man-made disasters. A staunch believer in the equality of all living beings, a humble and respectful admirer of the natural world, K. V. Dominic refuses to adopt the attitude of the instructor who, being more knowledgeable, can proudly (and ostentatiously) lead the way. Always wise and thought-provoking, his lines are never affected by egotism, nor are they ever focused on the poet, who simply vanishes into the background, as John Keats expected from a truly talented, chameleon-like writer. Nonetheless, Dominic’s poems (and *Cataracts of Compassion* in particular) teach us unforgettable lessons: they ooze with human sympathy, and provide readers with powerful models of faithfulness, courage, pity, and religious hope, which know neither labels nor boundaries.

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## Heal the World<sup>1</sup>: Agape as a Mode of Protest, Resistance and Empowerment in K.V. Dominic's Poetic Oeuvre

Kavitha Gopalakrishnan

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Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained. (Helen Keller)

There's a place in your heart / And I know that it is love / And this place could be much / Brighter than tomorrow / And if you really try...

There are ways to get there / If you care enough for the living / Make a little space / Make a better place.

Heal the world / Make it a better place... (Jackson 1992)

K.V. Dominic envisions the world as a whole with mutually reinforcing or mutually destructive interdependencies and believes that there is a mutual obligation between human, animal and plant communities. Poetry, for him, is a tool for instilling in others his all-encompassing compassion for other beings. This all-encompassing, unconditional, sacrificial love – Agape – is the dominant motif in all his poems.

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1 The title is taken from “Heal the World”, the seventh track on Michael Jackson’s 1992 album *Dangerous*. It is one of Jackson’s many songs on improving the world’s circumstances.

Agape is the Greek word for the love of the noblest kind which is not induced by appearance, attraction or emotional attachment. This love can be equated with God's love that is boundless and self-sacrificing. It is defined as "unconditional love that is always giving and impossible to take or be a taker.... This form of love is totally selfless and does not change whether the love given is returned or not" (White). It is through the dynamic and empathetic portrayal of this kind of noble love – agape – that the poet K. V. Dominic tries to move the common man to act against his own selfishness, apathy and indifference. Sometimes in a tone of endearing chiding, sometimes by coaxing, sometimes by moving the readers to tears, sometimes by warning us of the impending dangers, the poet effectively encourages us to see ourselves as part of the fundamental unity of all beings. Speaking on this he himself says:

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.... Are all creations – plants, animals, planets, stars – created solely for man? (qtd. in Prem 1)

In the poem "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", decrying man's "selfish thirst for comforts and luxuries", he says:

Laws of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam  
 eternal laws of the planet  
 Meant for humans and nonhumans  
 But rational human beings never care.

*(Contemporary Concerns 49)*

In the same poem, asserting on the importance of this 'whole world is one' philosophy, he says how the fauna, flora and human worlds are mutually dependent on each other for survival. A reflection of this thought keeps recurring in his poems as he feels that the humanity is yet to understand this. In "Multicultural Harmony" the poet writes:

My dear fellow beings  
.....  
The entire system  
is a grand concert  
composed by the Solespirit  
.....  
visible and invisible  
tangible and intangible  
.....  
are instruments multitudinous  
of His perfect symphony.

*(Multicultural Symphony 15)*

With Dominic, agape develops into deep empathy and he starts feeling one with the 'other'. He seems to echo Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy of the other which proposes that the ethical call for benevolence is primary and that it precedes self and all consideration of self. Nootboom elaborates thus:

For Levinas the feeling of responsibility for the other is not a rational choice but something that happens to you and that you experience as being chosen or 'elected' and that makes you unique, irreplaceable for the unique other. The ethical call is to surrender to the other, and to suffer from his suffering, an imperative that precedes all consideration. (1)

Dominic deeply feels this responsibility for the other to the extent that he is able to feel the emotions of the speechless beings – whether it is the mute sheep, or the mango tree, or the fish, or the slum-dwellers or the handicapped. In an instance

when he feels one with the mango tree in “I am just a Mango Tree”, he writes:

“Dear, why should they cut this tree  
a cool shelter to countless?  
They plan to build a waiting shed here  
.....  
Can’t they spare me and  
build it somewhere else?

*(Winged Reason 41)*

Many a times this purest form of love comes across as epiphanic moments. He puts across one such instance in the poem “My Teenage Hobby”:

Once when I pulled a fish,  
flashed a horrible vision:  
I am pulled from the sky;  
death struggle on the line.  
Awestruck and repentant,  
I unhooked the fish  
and dropped in the water.

*(Winged Reason 48)*

Through his poems Dominic keeps on driving the fact that the existence of human beings is dependent on the other beings on the face of earth. He writes about the indispensability of and interdependence on beings in the poem “Write My Son, Write”:

Your existence  
depends on others  
.....  
It’s your pettiness,  
viewing things  
in different ways,  
.....  
snakes, worms,  
.....  
all for me, good  
and beautiful;

but for you,  
 bad and ugly.  
 Your selfish mind  
 tries to ignore  
 benefits rendered  
 by these housemates.

*(Write Son, Write 25-26)*

Philosopher and critic Emmanuel Levinas, argues that the self cannot exist, cannot have a concept of itself as self, without the other. “I am defined as a subjectivity, as a singular person, as an ‘I’, precisely because I am exposed to the other. It is my inescapable and incontrovertible answerability to the other that make me an individual ‘I’” (qtd. in Kearney 62). Levinas’ ethical philosophy also states that the value of the other must exceed the value of the self. “In ethics, the other’s right to exist has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict: you shall not kill...” (qtd. in Kearney 60). The poet seems to be immensely influenced by Levinasian philosophy to “ethical turn” and this is evident when he draws from certain unforgettable instances from his own life – instances which make his poems relatable and believable. The accounts of the dilemmas he faced and how he overcame those inspire the readers to follow suit. In “How I Became a Vegetarian” he says:

lived non-veg life;  
 believed in the teachings  
 that man is the centre of universe  
 .....  
 my eyes are opened at last  
 and I have become  
 a pure vegetarian.

*(Winged Reason 76)*

In yet another poem, “A Sheep’s Wail”, Dominic personifies the sheep and gives it voice to chide man for killing other beings for his own pleasure:

The fur God gave me,  
mercilessly you sheer  
to make you cosy.  
The milk for my lamp  
you suck and drain  
and grow fat and cruel

.....

Man, you are the cruellest,  
you are the most ungrateful  
of all God's creations.

*(Winged Reason 24-25)*

When his neighbour poisons his dear cat Ammini he is angered at the mean and self-centred man who chooses to not to think beyond his comforts. In “Ammini’s Demise,” he chides for “turning the earth / to a big slaughter house, / as if man alone has / the right to live here. (*Winged Reason* 65). He sees agape as the only mode of resistance and protest against this callous nature of man. His poems showcase man’s neglect of the pain of other creatures and fellow beings. He is constantly concerned by the man’s exploitation of biosphere, the apathy shown towards fellow beings and other living creatures and writes to instil agape – all-encompassing love to other beings and wake them to their heinous indifference. He wishes to inspire change in the hearts of selfish human beings and to thus empower man to bring in peace and prosperity in the world:

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

*(Winged Reason 10 21)*

He repeatedly expresses his wish to endow man with angelic qualities: “God, make them humane / and turn them into angels” (*Winged Reason* 65). He also keeps reiterating his

deep-seated desire to change the world for the better in the poem "Write My Son, Write":

Write, my son,  
Write.  
Teach your folk  
their position.  
All the other beings aware  
of their humble position;  
only your species  
ignorant of his position.

(*Write Son, Write* 33)

Dominic's poetic oeuvre is driven by the belief that human beings are intimately interconnected to other beings and things – both animate and inanimate. This is what imbues his poetry with direction and purpose. He seeks life in nature and exemplifies the interconnectivity between Man and Nature. He sees God in nature and all beings – animate and inanimate. The poems propagate this philosophy of his. In the Foreword to *Cataracts of Compassion*, Mukhopadyaya writes:

Besides atmosphere, troposphere, mesosphere, stratosphere, thermosphere, a sphere of love and compassion surrounds our earthly existence where motherly love rules supreme. The motherly love is but a hazy brightness where the light of Buddha and Christ and their tribe mingle. And from the source of that ineffable light of Compassion, Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion* rains that outshines drops if any from rainbow clouds. (7-8)

Pronab Kumar Majumdar writes in the foreword for *Winged Reason*, "Dominic's compassion, sympathy, philosophy are abundantly present in forty one poems in this collection. In fine I should like to say: He sang songs of his soul which are compatible with those of humanity whole" (xi). Dominic himself states in the Preface to *Multicultural Symphony*:

My commonsense doesn't allow me to see God as a separate entity. I believe that there is a Supreme Power or Energy which is controlling

this universe....That power is the spirit or soul of the universe and its element is present in all its creations including atoms. Thus divinity is there in all bodies, both living and non-living. Based on this reason I cannot find human beings better than other beings or dearest to the creator.

*(Multicultural Symphony 8)*

The poet portrays God's immense and all-encompassing love – the truest model of agape when he pens the various forms in which God reasons out with man – heart-rending monologues, chiding and painful plea. God is pained to see how man treats Nature and other beings with indifference. To quote again a few extracts from his masterpiece poem “Write My Son, Write”:

I breathed in him  
celestial values:  
happiness, beauty,  
peace, love, mercy;  
but he fosters  
hate and violence;  
kills his kith and kin;  
shows no mercy  
to animals and plants.

*(Write Son, Write 16)*

He chides man when he sees apathy and animosity that he breeds:

Who gave you right  
to kill my creations?  
The way you torture  
fowl and cattle,  
bereft food and water,  
caged and chained,....  
The fish you catch  
struggle for breath  
and cause your glee!

*(Write Son, Write 17-18)*

Later on God makes plea to mankind and he painfully asks man:

Why don't you  
learn from Nature?  
Animals and birds  
present you models.  
Models of pure love,  
happiness, hard work,  
suffering, kindness,  
patience, sharing,  
fellowship, gratitude.

*(Write Son, Write 18)*

The poet brings out how human values are violated even in the name of God. In the poem "In the Name of God", the poet exposes how the name of God is used to cover illegal actions. He also thinks that 'criminal actions' done in the name of God outnumber the good ones 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.

*(Winged Reason 69)*

In yet another poem "When Religion Plays Upper Hand" too the poet raises the same concern:

Instead of finding God in all humans  
and all His creations  
some discern God only in the people  
who belong to their community

How irrationally they hunt others  
 as their enemies and butcher them  
 to please their God who is infinite love.

*(Cataracts of Compassion 68)*

Though the poet has been a witness to man's callousness, he does not lose hope on mankind's possibility of humane transformation. In "What is Spirituality", he tells us that the true spirit of spirituality lies not in visiting places of worship but "doing real services / through words and actions / to your fellow beings / including non-human / and plant world?" (*Contemporary Concerns* 54). He even defines what kind of service one must engage in order to enable human beings to reaffirm their faith in humanity and empower them with love. He says that "words and deeds / done to serve others are Satvik karma" and that "Satvik karma bears no stamp of the doer;... (and) never expects return from the beneficiary (*Contemporary Concerns* 52-53). For those who find it hard to fathom the extent to which this love can work miracles or for those who need a model to emulate, the poet presents us the sacrificial love of Buddha in "Enlighten Us Lord Buddha":

Great was his compassion  
 for dear wife and infant son  
 But greater was his love  
 for suffering human race

*(Cataracts of Compassion 16)*

Describing Buddha as worthy of emulation and worship he continues:

Your outlook is broader than  
 other schools of religious thoughts  
 Every religion advises us  
 to love fellow humans  
 some even teach to love  
 their own followers more  
 But you taught us to show

equal care and compassion  
to all creatures of this world  
destruction of any creature  
is disturbance of universal order  
Hence enlighten the world Lord Buddha  
and fill this planet with peace and happiness  
*(Cataracts of Compassion 23)*

In all his poems, Dominic takes special care to instil in the mind of readers the necessity of sacrificial, all-encompassing, selfless, unbounded love. This is perhaps why, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya has written in the foreword to *Cataracts of Compassion* that “Like Lord Buddha Dominic does not revel in any high strung political thought or economic thought. And yet his homemade economic and political ideas could wipe the tear off the face of the world” (8-9).

The poet is deeply disturbed when he sees the man not being compassionate about others, or indiscriminately destroying nature, or tapping the natural resources without much care, or taking the lives of other beings. In part Twenty One of “Write My Son, Write”, he gives us an ultimatum that if we do not mend our ways doom is the result.

If they heed  
they will be saved;  
other beings  
will be saved;  
.....  
and the universe  
as such will be saved  
*(Write Son, Write 37)*.

He also shows how man often turns a blind eye at the sufferings of fellow beings and lives his life in comfort without the prick of conscience. In “Haves and Have-nots” we find such a portrayal:

When millions die of hunger,  
 thousands compete for delicacies.  
 Minority always luxuriates  
 at the cost of  
 majorities' necessities.

(*Winged Reason* 36)

He also draws from real people and incidents so as to make his poems more relatable and rooted to reality. He draws out humane figures from around the locality, and one such is the vivid portrayal of Venkatachalam who “showers love and selfless service on old and deserted” (*Contemporary Concerns* 51). The poet thus uses his poems to serve as a catalyst to engender the need of coexistence and cultivating empathy and benevolence for a harmonious peaceful living on the face of the earth. He effectively encourages us to see our connection with all other human beings, and with other living creatures beyond as he is totally convinced that only when we can identify ourselves as part of an interconnected system can we call ourselves as living a complete and fulfilling life on this planet.

Dominic envisions a harmonious world and thus makes a clarion call for a change in outlook of man if he hopes to live in this world for many more years. He says that this change would be made possible if human kind imbibes the spirit of the highest form of love – agape so as to forgive each other’s faults, overlook flaws, forget past wounds, and thus be endowed with renewed energy bestowed with the help of immeasurable, unconditional love similar to the all-encompassing love that God has for us. This love would help us to heal ourselves and heal the world for a better ‘morrow.

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**Poverty and Inequality: Economic  
Interpretation of K. V. Dominic's Poems**

**Dr. Mousumi Ghosh**

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Dear Reader,

Poems and economics, is it or can it be a topic for serious readers? They are alien to each other like chalk and cheese. To bring them within the same spectrum seems to be impossible. In the language of economics, one may say that the value of cross elasticity between them is zero. But a piece of literature, be it poetry or a story is a fountain of thoughts, the thought of a creative human being. And a true creative mind cannot remain oblivious of the joys and sorrows of the others in the society because a human being is a social person. For some few compassionate minds, the society cannot be geographically determined within a specific bounded territory. K. V. Dominic, the Indian English poet, is one of them.

Poverty, unemployment, plight of the people in an unorganised sector and informal jobs sans any job security or satisfaction, gender inequality, wearing out the environment for the sake of rampant urbanisation, war, loss of wealth etc. are the themes of his poems. And many of those poems are case studies with substantial data. There are also poems based on the true incidents collected from daily newspapers.

K. V. Dominic's poem 'African Poverty' is a poem of twenty lines, the third poem in the book *Cataracts of Compassion*. Poverty seems to be a never ending woe to the conscious minds. The first five lines of the poems are apparently full of assurance:

Use of modern science in agriculture  
made revolution in production of food  
World now produces food materials  
suffice to feed entire human race  
and seventeen percent surplus than needs

The poet mentions about the scientific advancement in the green field, the implementation of new agricultural strategy and its impact on agricultural production and productivity. And he has available data to assure that seventeen percent surplus is there. We, the children of the Mother Earth seem to be free of any problem of food security. Food security is the availability of food and one's access to it. The World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security as existing when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. But presently there is an instance of bathos.

From the sixth line, the reader experiences the shocks. The poet says:

Yet four African nations - South Sudan,  
Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria die of poverty..

What is poverty? The World Bank Organisation describes poverty as hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not having access to school and not knowing how to read, not having a job, fear for the future and living one day at a time. Poverty has many faces, changing from place to

place and across time. And commonly it is a situation which people want to escape.

The poet K. V. Dominic with his clear economic insight is right to understand that poverty kills a whole nation, not some nationals. The irony in his poems is real and harsh. And moreover, Dominic did not forget to mention about the plight of another fifteen countries where millions of people are in hunger, and the most vulnerable ones are the weaker sections - the children, women and the old ones. And the poet is in search of the causes of the food crisis. He through his modest chosen words pointed out how civil wars are responsible for aggravated poverty. At the same time blamed the rich countries and their wealthy citizens for depriving the poor of wealth and food. The poet asks:

When will rich have prick of conscience  
for hoarding poor's share and wealth  
and starving them to die?

Indeed, the World Bank data states that globally, one in ten people is undernourished and does not have enough food to meet his or her dietary needs. Undernourishment is most widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia and Pacific. And Dominic's poem is not only matter of fact data of deprivation and inequality the world is going through. The poem of twenty lines nudges a reader from his or her leisure and comfort of reading a poem. They prick the conscience of the readers. At the same time, a glance at the poems of K V Dominic reveals a large waterfall of compassion. And compassion in its truest sense should be the building block of any economic development, planning and actions.

Dear reader, please allow me to digress for a few lines. It is the news of Raj Kumar Vaishya of Bihar in India in the

newspaper (*Times of India*, Kolkata page no 6, dated 28.12.2017). As per the newspaper report, the ninety eight years old one Mr. Vaishya became one of the oldest students to receive a post graduate degree in Economics in 2017. His reason for studying the subject was to understand poverty so that he could help eliminate it. He felt sad when standing in his balcony he saw the kids picking rags. He wondered what the government has done to eliminate poverty. The nonagenarian with his never ending zeal for an equitable society is an inspiration to view the burning reality with bare eyes not with official data and statistics which may miss the child rag-picker. But the eyes of the ninety eight years old have not missed the little angel of a rag-picker.

Similarly, the official data and statistics may not take into account the gymnast of the circus company. Dominic's poem 'Circus Rani, Queen of Woes' however is what the research methodology in economics would refer to as a case study of workers in the informal and unorganised sectors. The poem pictures how the grueling poverty compelled a widowed woman from a North Eastern State of India to sell Rani, her daughter, to a circus company when she was only ten. Rani daily entertains the viewers with her acrobatic skills risking her life for thirteen years. And she is concerned about her uncertain future. Rani is worried about her future. She will be unemployed when she grows old because she will not be able to perform her acrobatics then. The poem throws light on some neglected arenas of social science research.

The poem 'Equality in India' laid bare the extent of inequality of wealth and distribution in India, the largest democracy. The poet wonders:

Seventy percent of Indians live in villages  
 Seventy five percent of rural India  
 lives on thirty three rupees per day

India's richest one percent holds  
 fifty eight percent of country's total wealth  
 Fifty seven billionaires in India  
 keep equal wealth of the entire villages  
 Wherein lies the so called equality?  
 Yet India is largest democracy in the world!

No text book of economics can explain as lucidly the harsh truth of the inequality of wealth in the Indian economy.

In the poem 'Housemaid's Dreams', the maid Debopriya is from Bengal who works as a babysitter in Kerala. Poverty is the cause of her inter-State migration. Kerala, one knows is among the developed States of India. And it is not only the white collar people, but also the blue collar people and even the women force need to migrate from a less prosperous State to a more prosperous one. Debopriya lives in her employer's home but she is insecure of her future. To her, the model of happiness is the way of living of her employers. She is unhappy because she knows that she will not be able to achieve that. And the two ending lines of the poem are:

Poor people are destined to dream and dream  
 while rich fulfill what they dream and desire

The poet decoded the notion of poverty and happiness in his poems with his lucid language. To a poor person, happiness is the way of living of a rich one which she or he wants to imitate. And so, happiness remains to be ever illusive, a mirage for him or her.

Micro study is an absolute necessity for any research based study of economics. And Economics, being a multidisciplinary subject itself can take the necessary inputs from other disciplines and specially literatures and specially poems of suitable themes. A poet like Dominic never ignores the society and economy he lives. The contemporary issues are themes of

his poems. One can get a clear idea of Indian economy, its path of development, a fair idea of his own State Kerala, the conditions of people working in not the so called mainstream jobs but who are indispensable for the economy in Dominic's poetry. Dominic's deep concern for sustainable development is evident in each line of any of his poems.

*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* is a collection of K. V. Dominic's thirty eight poems. The first poem 'A Cremator's Struggle for Existence' should be read by anybody who wants to have a glimpse of the zest for life amidst poverty. The character Selena, a fifty plus woman, is a lone cremator of a crematorium. She works on contract basis. It is one of the most unpleasant jobs, where she gets net Rs. 450 for her dreadful work of burning a body in a municipal public crematorium. She cremated average twenty bodies monthly. And the poet says:

Kith and kin of body leave  
once cremation fuel is ignited  
Heat and fume of the burning body  
Explosive sounds of crushing bones  
Dreading darkness of deep night  
None but burning body as companion  
But no force can dissuade her  
firm determination to voyage life.

The poem is based on a newspaper report. The poet is bold enough to highlight the miseries even of those whose hard work seem to be invisible to the authorities who are entrusted to provide greatest good to the greatest number of people.

Dominic's poems reflect the value system of India. The poet is not against the modern development but his poems stress on the merits of constructive flexibility in the approach of development and planning in India. The poem 'An Airport Made of Tears' touches upon some serious contemporary

sensitive issues. The poem begins like a dream, indeed the dream of a private construction group for its dream project:

Proposed Aranmula International Airport  
 A dream project of private construction group  
 Intends to construct airport city in 3000 acres  
 Eighty percent land paddy fields and wet lands  
 Rice and fish can earn four hundred crores per year

.....  
 Razing of four hills for filling wet lands  
 leading to water shortage and loss of biodiversity  
 Will affect serenity and sanctity of Parthasarathy temple  
 Three thousand poor families to be evicted  
 But they are not willing to leave  
 their sustaining lands, jobs and houses

.....  
 Fake development policy of the State  
 Dancing to tunes of billionaire corporate  
 An airport totally unnecessary  
 Two international airports on either side  
 Two hours drive will take you there  
 The poem goes on telling:  
 The government pleads for the corporate  
 Ignores the pleas of opposition parties  
 Pooh-poohs warnings of environmentalists  
 The poem ends with the cautious warning:  
 Beware! Maoists are never born  
 They are made where injustice rules

The poem touches upon so many contemporary as well as sensitive issues like the land encroachment, role of an elected government in a democracy, eviction of the natives from their birthplace, destruction of traditional livelihood pattern of the people of the region, economic loss of no bounds, destruction of habitats of the non-human occupants, unsustainable development and the growth of conflict and terrorism. Dominic's poems are pathfinders to any reader to whom people matter most. The poems are radical challenges to the

contemporary dehumanising economic system and are the pathfinders to an alternative way of living. They explain the poet's sincere effort to make aware the readers that it is high time we think of an alternative economy for the sustenance of our present home, the earth.

With deepest regards,

A Friend

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**Social Awareness in K.V. Dominic's Poetry  
– A Critical Analysis**

**K. Pankajam**

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Human minds, especially of young persons, are groping in the dark corridors of ignorance and restlessness. Unless they are guided properly, the path they tread may lead them to unholy lands and may end up committing acts detrimental to self and to the society as a whole, which ultimately prompt them to treat themselves inferior or useless. Psycho-somatic disorders are found in such people making them turn to drugs, alcoholism, self-pity, depression, etc. Religious fanatics and other opportunists make use of these individuals; they poison their minds and make them act like puppets in their hands. These misguided people lose direction, mortgage their thinking power, forget their responsibilities, lose moral ethics and they become what one should not become. Proper guidance and moral education are needed to bring them to the right track. As far as K.V. Dominic is concerned, anything adverse happening anywhere is an issue that prompts him to write. This study mainly focuses on the social awareness in Dominic's poems with specific reference to two of his poetry collections *Cataracts of Compassion* and *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*.

Prof. K. V. Dominic, who worked as a faculty member of the Post Graduate Department of English, Newman College,

Thodupuzha, Kerala, India is the Secretary of *Guild of Indian English Writers (GIEWEC)*, Editor-in chief of *Writers Editors Critics (WEC)* and Publisher and Editor of *International Journal on Multicultural Literature (IJML)*. He is a sensitive poet, who is compassionate to the core and his poems abundantly vouch for his social consciousness, sensitivity, and compassion.

The world has enough to meet out the needs of mankind, but not enough for their greed. Unlike other material comforts, money, clothes or gold, food is one thing which people say no to, when their hunger is satisfied. This being so, when certain countries of the world has excess of food, elsewhere in other countries people are starving. This situation is absurd and is enough to cause prick of conscience to people with empathy and humanity. Even within the same locality we often witness that food wasted in marriages and other functions of affluent people can feed so many starving stomachs. Dominic raises a very pertinent question of global importance in his poem 'African Poverty'.

How can the rich and rich countries  
waste their excess food  
when their wretched siblings  
cry for just a meal a day?  
When will the rich have prick of conscience  
for hoarding poor's share and wealth  
and starving them to die?

(*Cataracts of Compassion*)

Love for the country is foremost in many of the poems of Dominic. Mother India is being devastated by unscrupulous people from various walks of life in umpteen ways with selfish motives and for their own profits. Many people have fought for this country's freedom, shed their blood and even sacrificed their lives, but the politicians forget these sacrifices and loot the country's wealth and the poet in Dominic is concerned about

this pitiable fate of the country, like in the poem 'Mother India, I Weep...'

Your valiant sons and daughters  
fought against them  
shedding their blood and  
even sacrificing their lives

.....

Your politician sons suck your blood  
Rape you and even attempt matricide  
They shoot arrows and you lie bleeding  
Unlike Bhishma lying on bed of arrows  
could choose time of his death  
you are dying inch by inch day after day

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

People seeking asylum in alien lands have to cross many hurdles to reach a safe place. Often in such journeys, hundreds of precious lives are sacrificed to the vagaries of rough seas, cunning middlemen, natural calamities etc. Adding to their woes are laws of the lands which prescribe stringent measures to get settled as refugees and avail aid from foreign lands. In this scenario, Dominic's soliloquy is very relevant that had it been birds, there would have been no need for any concern for territorial issues and the entire globe is for them to explore and enjoy. Poem 'Angles as Refugees' deals with this fact effectively.

Sea has saved thousands already  
from their poverty and miseries  
pulling down as toppled from boats

.....

How happy are the birds!  
Need not bother much for food  
You provide them what they need  
They have no restraints or territory  
The whole planet is theirs

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

Going by the newspaper reports, dog menace has become a serious issue now-a-days in his home State. Some people taking cover of these incidents act as butchers and mercilessly kill dogs in public view even without any provocation. Dominic in his poem 'Dog's Curse on Human Beings' analyses this issue and with a humane heart says that the famished dogs attack and prey upon pedestrians out of extreme starvation only. He raises the question that how can they be labeled as man-eaters and massacred mercilessly? The animal lover in Dominic reminds mankind that this earth is for animals too, as it is for us men:

Famished, a few become violent  
 and prey upon pedestrians  
 And you start massacre  
 killing all stray dogs labeling  
 violent or man-eaters  
 .....  
 We too have a right  
 as all other animals have  
 to live and share  
 its sustaining wealth.

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

Endosulphan Tragedy in Kasargod District in Kerala is a notorious man-made catastrophe caused by spraying of highly toxic chemicals by the State owned Plantation Corporation of Kerala to contain menace of tea mosquito bugs in cashew plantations, which caused and continue to cause various health hazards for generations like still-born children, children born with cleft palates, other congenital malformations and abnormalities and the government could not compensate the victims sufficiently. The humanist in Dominic takes up the issue in his own style in poem 'Endosulphan Tragedy' and the poem he concluded thus:

A government of the people, by the people  
 and for the people proved against the people!

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

The economic disparities in India are drawn to an alarming picture in the poem titled 'Equality in India' with facts and figures of real statistics. Dominic says that while we boast India is the largest democracy in the world, the fact is that the richest one percent Indians hold fifty eight percent of the country's total wealth with fifty seven billionaires, eight percent of India's population lives in slums and above three million are without a roof over their head! This is a dismal state. The rich and the poor exist side-by-side in our country, which has a psychological impact of instilling despondency and may lead to crimes. The poet asks: What is the point in boasting as the biggest democracy in the world, when the government is not able to ensure, equality, fraternity and liberty, which are the watchwords of democracy? He also has the reason i.e. the evasion of tax and the solution to fix the anomalies. The concluding lines of the poem are clear pointers to this effect.

When less than three percent Indians pay income tax  
 where is there equality of wealth and distribution?  
 Yet India is largest democracy in the world!

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

Violence in the name of religion and God has become very common. Even educated youth are drawn towards terrorism. To this boys and girls are no exception now-a-days. They are brain-washed to the extent of sacrificing their own lives for the so-called principles and in the end lose their life, throwing their parents, family and loved ones in eternal sorrow and loss. No religion insists bloodshed or killing of our own brethren. No Gods can be pleased by causing miseries to human beings. No gain is possible at the cost of loss to others. Born in noble families to parents who struggle to educate their wards and make many sacrifices to bring them up, all are forgotten as in a

magical influence of some ill-gotten souls and prepare themselves to involve in hateful and heinous activities. Dominic refers to this social evil in the poem 'From Lamb to Wolf', a contemporary issue so relevant everywhere.

How can God, epitome of love, be pleased  
by violence and bloodshed in His name?

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

A young widow's life with two little kids living in the city of Mumbai is painfully depicted in the poem 'I am an Indian Young Widow'. She suffers not alone from financial difficulties, but emotional and moral supports also are hard to come her way. Moreover, the Indian society which looks at a widow as someone who is inauspicious and imposes lot of restrictions on widows, like not allowing participating in auspicious functions, etc., make her life miserable. The poet gets into the shoes of the lady in the poem and says that though she is the one who opposes the practice of women ending their life on the funeral pyre of their husbands, now she finds some sense in it because;

Hellish is the life of an Indian widow  
Tragic and nightmarish if she is young  
Patriarchy doesn't allow her to survive  
Eagles fly over her wherever she goes

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

Issues relating to women find a prominent place in Dominic's poetry. The women's reservation bill which is stonewalled for years in India is the subject matter in poem 'Women Denied Justice'. He gives facts and figures of women's reservation in other countries and urge the government to give due consideration to tithe figures he gives show that we are much behind and apathetic when it comes to women and their rights.

Fifty percent of my compatriots are women  
Women Reservation Bill still in freezer

.....

And my own most literate State Kerala  
humiliates us with only five percent

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

The problems of transgender persons also find representation in Dominic's poems. The plight of those people, even well-educated ones are duly taken up in poem titled 'Transgender Techie Begging for Survival'.

Supreme Court legally approved their third gender  
It's duty of government to treat them equals  
Make reservations for their education and employment  
It's duty of citizens to love them as siblings  
and protect them from all exploitations

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

Media ethics are ignored by journalists and newspapers and they publish distorted facts according to their affiliation to political and religious mafias or giant corporates, for reasons best known to them and they make a sinner, a saint and vice versa. Dominic insists that media should be independent and should have the courage to call a spade, a spade. The poet's angst is reflected against such evil practices in the poem 'In Search of Impartial Reports' as reflected in the following lines.

Instead of calling a spade a spade  
they make a goat a dog  
a saint a sinner or sinner a saint  
As immorality prevails every field  
fair is foul and foul is fair.

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

The poem titled 'Musings on the Killing of a Tiger' is about a real incident of the brutal killing of a tiger. Dominic, who is an animal lover, asks: "Why was the tiger so brutally killed? Famished in forest what else could it do? Has it any

division like forest or village? Hasn't it right to live as human beings have? What right has human beings to destroy its habitat? "All these sensible questions are addressed to the human beings who are directly and indirectly responsible for invading the forests and thereby forcing the wild animals to come down to villages in search of food:

Being a carnivore it sought its prey  
and killed a few cattle for just its survival  
How devilishly man netted and stoned it to death?

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

'Tribute to SAI Sanctuary' is a real tribute to the owners of the only private wildlife sanctuary in India, a couple from Pune, who converted 300 acres of barren land at Kodagu district of Karnataka into thick forest with a view to provide sanctuary to animals.

They proclaim to the world through life that  
the land we got from ancestors  
should be given back, if not bettered,  
to the future generation to survive  
They propagate the message that  
forest needs animals and animals  
help forests in regeneration

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

Climatic conditions have alarmingly changed globally. The earth is becoming hotter and hotter. Rains are becoming fewer and fewer. Global warming is a dangerous phenomenon that lurks humankind. Life on earth would be difficult if this condition is allowed to continue. Men cut trees recklessly and build concrete jungles. The equilibrium in nature is losing steadily. Agriculture is failing and farmers without finding ways for livelihood end their lives pathetically. Unless this is addressed urgently, life on earth will become difficult. The poet hears

Nature's wails, which is dealt with in poem 'No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds'.

Days of continuous rains are  
driven away by hot summer days  
.....  
Natural dense forests are swept away  
to create concrete buildings and townships

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

Farmers, the 'providers of food' in any country, are to be remembered gratefully. They are the people producing food for the entire population, but they are perennially under peril because of constant monsoon failures and consequential debt traps. Many of them go to the extent of ending their lives and the government has not done enough to prevent such drastic steps by the farmers. The poem 'Salute to Farmers' is very sensible, emotionally touching and calls for treating the farmers with extreme gratitude.

Farmers, feeders of a nation  
less remembered gratefully  
or least honoured and rewarded

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

The reckless acts of men bring the earth under great danger of extinction and the poet calls for urgent remedies to save the earth. The poem 'I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth' is an ode to mother earth.

Man, can't you hear those tremors of curses  
hurled on you by endangered animals, birds and plants?  
Man, I can hear mother earth cursing you  
As Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

Again the theme of safeguarding the earth finds due representation in the poem 'Tearful Exodus', which is quite explicit.

Nature's annihilating human villains  
who turned fertile lands to arid wastelands  
and then lead luxurious lives in AC rooms  
and bathe in swimming pools in metro cities  
When miserable farmers in thousands  
make tearful exodus for their survival  
criminal billionaires fly abroad  
seeking refuge from government's arrest  
for evading tax and keeping trillions of  
black money in foreign non taxable banks

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

'Rosy Dog is Waiting' is a poem that shows the affection of a pet dog towards its master. The dog refuses to eat and cries through day and night without seeing its master, who succumbed to a land slide, the poor thing did not know. This incident is real and was reported in the press. For Dominic's eyes, anything happening around, which has social relevance is worthy to be converted into poems. The poet juxtaposes the sincere love of this pet to that of present day children, who do not take care of their parents and send them either to streets or dump in old age homes.

Parents become burden when they are old!  
Long and pray for their earliest death  
or discard them to streets or old age homes!

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

A tendency to desert parents in old age by their own children is found everywhere. They are being thought as a burden without even remembering the sacrifices they made to bring them up, educate and find suitable life partners. The poem 'Parents Deserted' will cause sensible hearts to think and bleed.

Old and weak when such parents  
need support from their children  
how can they be treated as burden?

.....

Beware! Life is a vicious cycle  
Today's children tomorrow's parents!

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

'Eating Gives Bliss' is a short poem in which the poet experiences the same joy and contentment as mothers feeding her children derives, when he feeds his pets, cattle and birds or a hungry beggar.

When eater gets sensual pleasure  
feeder gets eternal bliss  
How blissful are mothers  
seeing their children gulping!  
Equal bliss we experience  
when our cats and dogs  
finish their plates so fast  
Same is the bliss we get  
when we feed cattle and birds  
or a hungry beggar in house  
Isn't this the state of heaven  
and why should we seek it elsewhere?

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

In poem titled 'Peace! Silence!! Grave Silence!!!' the obsession of people engaged in social media and the corresponding apathy of the family members towards one another is the subject matter. No doubt the social media has brought in an explosion in communication, but people has become islands among themselves and do not care much for what is happening around. Virtual relationships have taken over the real time friends, chats, fun and frolics. In every household the situation is the same. Dominic draws a picture of such a house-hold in this poem.

Grandpa reads Bible  
Grandma reads Bhagavatam  
Grandchildren aged eight and twelve  
write never ending homework  
Their dad is drowned in Facebook

Mom buried in WhatsApp  
No sound from anywhere  
Seems like haunted house

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

‘When religion plays upper hand on youth and children, secularism and patriotism are devoured by religious fanaticism’ says the poet in poem titled ‘When Religion Plays Upper Hand’. They do not realise that God is nothing but infinite love.

Instead of finding God in all humans  
and all His creations  
some discern God only in the people  
who belong to their community  
How irrationally they hunt others  
as their enemies and butcher them  
to please their God who is infinite love

*(Cataracts of Compassion)*

The plight of children kidnapped makes the poet grieve. They are being employed as sex slaves, made to beg on the streets, used for harvesting organs or used as bonded labourers. Here also he gives enough facts and figures and strongly condemns this inhumane activities and records his strong objection in the poem ‘Child Trafficking’:

Non-human beings always  
love their offsprings and  
protect them from all dangers  
Human being refined being  
proves often debased being!

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

The martyrdom of Lance Naik B Sudeesh, just 29 years old at Siachen, the highest battle field, a place where even crows can't survive, is so painfully depicted in the poem ‘Tribute to Siachen Martyrs’. The name Siachen refers to a land with an abundance of roses. But the fact is that not even blades of grasses can grow here. The *Siachen* conflict, referred to as the

*Siachen War*, was a military conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed *Siachen Glacier* region in Kashmir. This is a glacier located in the eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayas which (along with the area around it) is claimed by both India and Pakistan, and has been occupied by India since 1984. An armistice went into effect in 2003. The plight of our jawans serving there is pathetic, due to the freezing cold and other related problems, which demand their precious lives. Dominic is extremely sad at the heartrending plight of our young jawans, who are posted to guard the Indo-Pak border at Siachen. He raises so many pertinent questions that need to be resolved on war footing by the two countries in the interest of the jawans due to the vulnerability of the place:

When thousands die of hunger everyday on either side  
 hundreds of millions are spent on this vulnerable place  
 Whose craze it is? For whom it is? People's welfare?  
 People aren't iron-hearted to see their patriots  
 suffer so sorely and sacrifice their precious lives

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

The Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' is a noble principle, which Dominic wants to propagate through his poems. Amity is required not only among humans, but among the animal and plant worlds too, as human world is dependent on plant and animal worlds. Abiding friendship is the key to attain this objective. Division of people on the basis of classes, colour, caste, religion, language, politics, nation etc., demote love and promote hate, the poet says, and calls for collective action:

Carnivores prey not for thrill  
 but for existence  
 But man kills man not for food  
 Intelligence makes him narrow.  
 .....  
 Human world always dependent of  
 plant world and animal world

Extinction of any species  
affects our own survival  
Damages done to ecology  
can't be remedied singular  
Needs collective efforts of nations

*(Contemporary Concerns and Beyond)*

Poems are intended not alone for enjoyment, but for giving messages. Such messages should be simple, straight and easy to understand. At a time when there is purportedly a clamor about readership for poetry being disturbingly dwindling, it is quite sensible to make it appealing without unnecessary jargon, terminologies and banter, so that readers can appreciate it. Dominic through his poems undertakes this task of guiding the readers, educates them and impart values. The themes of his poems are all socially relevant and impart moral values. He raises his voice against all evils like corruption, mal-practices, inhuman acts, cruelty to animals, terrorism and all other social evils which he comes across, in simple terms and his way of addressing the issues is straight and sharp. His poems are intended to create empathy and peace and hence his poetic passion is steered towards a peace-making endeavour.

**Multicultural Symphony with  
Four Cords: K.V. Dominic's  
Clarion Call of Conscience**

**Dr. Poonam Dwivedi**

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With only three words, the poet in his “Preface” to the book *Winged Reason* has potted the seven oceans, all the mountains and plains with gorges and heights of human relations as the poet himself has candidly admitted in the “Preface” to the book “the major theme of my poetry is the eternal relationship between Man, Nature and God.” Hence it becomes obvious that his hidden meaning is that beyond the human relations, visible world of senses, and invisible domain of the unmanifest Almighty, there seems to be nothing left in the eyes of Dr. K. V. Dominic. Let us have an overview of the four cords of multicultural symphony i.e. four books authored by the poet, namely, *Winged Reason*, *Write Son*, *Write*, *Multicultural Symphony* and *A Collection of New Poems* compiled into a book entitled *K V Dominic: Essential Readings and Study Guide*.

*Winged Reason* is the first book of poems which is an assortment of sentiments expressed from time to time containing the nostalgic reminiscences of a lost friend and tributes etc. besides the political views, social commentary, reaction towards socio-economic inequality, and many more feelings of a

sensitive soul. If the assortment is taken as a whole without fragmenting the soulful outpours and outbursts, the collection seems to be personified true Indian who has behind millenniums of civilisation and futuristic dawn to begin 'A Blissful Voyage.'

The factual state of the international arena plagued in unwanted battles has been vividly depicted by the poet with contrast to the wishful imagery of a benevolent vulture with claws to set the things right. Similarly terrorism at the macro level as well as at the micro level has been dealt by using the 'bullet' and 'Gandhi' in the backdrop. The art of poetic excellence can only be achieved if there is realism garnished with rich imagery is dished out to the readers. Dominic has been successful in the 'blissful voyage' which is otherwise painful and sordid. The poem has used the word 'voyage' whereas it is 'flight' and hovering over the pacific to Indian Ocean by using 'fly like an angel' and 'I could fly to the States.'

The poet's imagination takes reasoned wings even in his sleep. The anomalies and abnormalities in the societal setup and behaviour compels the sensitivity of the poet to react and he makes a composition to highlight the absurdities and oddities which are making our daily life miserable, if it is to be seen collectively. The poet has a vision to be living in a peaceful atmosphere without having any spec of violence. "Man, you are the cruelest, / you are the most ungrateful / of all god's creations." (8)

It is not only killing and slaughtering of animals, but also the practice of beggary, haves and have-nots, labourers, old age, a widow and criminal actions done in the name of God, all such theme have prompted Dominic to pen down long poems with a solution, suggestive mid-path of Buddha, and universal thought

of 'live and let others live.' Some poems have personal narration of experience like "How I Became a Vegetarian" and "Kaumudi Teacher is no More"; in the same vein are written "Cry of My Child" and twin poems on his cat "Ammini's Lament" and "Ammini's Demise."

The second book *Write Son, Write*, is again a sort of anthology of poems either written on the provocation of an incident, fateful event, or shocking happening which may have shaken the conscience of the poet to pen down his volatile eruptions inside. Without repeating the tributes and memoriam poems and bravo poetry on the events, I would like to take up "Hunger's Call" as the poem has international theme of universal significance. The hunger is not only in Zimbabwe it is wide spread throughout the world. It is said that half of the humanity sleep without food at night. The universality of theme makes the poem great as the poet has tried to convey the ill-effect of the globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation. A contemporary commentary on the sorry state of affairs, environmental pollution, deforestation and erosion of fertile soil resulting draughts and floods have been taken up in the poem "Nature Weeps" which is very long poem to have been written awhile looking to the abodes of reptiles to the tiger reserves, fluttering flowers and flying birds in the sky. The poetic feast is wholesome in all its respects. The substance, theme, rhythm and rhyme, sound sense, diction and the range is comprehensive and exhaustive.

International Women's Day undoubtedly impresses the poet who has composed one poem in the Book-I but now another poem "Musings from an Infant's Face" comes written on the International Women's Day. The theme is fresh and soulful. The pathetic musing and symphony of the absurd inequality and depravity comes alive when the poet says:

Her mother's appearance  
 foretold the infant's lot.  
 Born to poor parents,  
 how thorny would be  
 the path of her life! (115)

The divinity has been devoted to twin poems, adjoining to each other namely "For the Glory of God" and second is "God is helpless" – both the poems, if read between the lines, tell a tale of rationale mind. Both the poems are written in one breath without having any pause, stanza or any yardstick to measure the outpour. It is pure outcome of shaken sensibilities and a demonstration by an individual to the Almighty for its negation, deprivation and plunge to torture the devotees for the reasons unknown to the mankind. Another poem worth noticing is "Crow, the Black Beauty" which is rare in its thematic and it is very well written. The striking lines are universal in its connotations as these have subtle symbolism. The poet asks question to the civilised world:

When will the Black and the White  
 dwell in the same house  
 and dine from the same plate?  
 When will we behold God's creation  
 with impartial eyes  
 and find His beauty in all forms?" (105)

Nature provides respite to the poet from the disgust and depressed feelings of unequal and cruel world. "Nature's Bounties" and watching "The dancing of the plant; / the smiling of the flower; / the chirping of the bird; / and all merry cries of other beings, / herald Life's march here." (13)

Dominic has used S. T. Coleridge's famous lines "Water, water everywhere / not a drop to drink." In a neo-style of his own connecting it with "Absence of rains and trees, / enhanced by global warming, /..." and further "Water rationed; / per day

quota / half a glass.” The ingenuity of brain storms the poetic hackneyed track on which the mundane poets tread daily. The experimentation and innovation of theme, style and substance portrays relevance to the contemporary problems faced by the society.

Prof. R. K. Singh has rightly called him “a poet of quest” whereas Aju Mukhopadhyay discovers in Dominic “a realist with deep social feelings.” The reviewer has appropriately assessed “human sufferings make his heart bleed, loss of freedom suffocates him. Not only human but animal sufferings too pain him. At some rare moments the nature lover in him appreciates nature’s beauty or peeps into a cuckoo’s nest.” The lamentation in poetry of Dominic has been highlighted by Aju Mukhopadhyay in few words: “it is said that though his imaginary creator created man ideally, he “fosters hate and violence.” (139)

PCK Prem, a great Indian poet and critic has evaluated Dominic’s poetry in its true sense and value, in his words: “*Winged Reason* enshrines a definite message. Perhaps it is a rare collection of poems in Indian English Poetry that is realistic. Here, the words with the tonal values do not distract with multifaceted meanings. The poet believes in simple, straight and plain language while showing genuine anxiety for socially neglected segments of society.” The revered critic may be right in the contextual relevance, but the poems are too simple to be rated ‘high esteemed’ in my opinion. Literature has to be truthful (Satyam), in other words realistic as Dominic writes and PCK Prem endorses, but still two yardsticks to judge literature of excellence require ingredients of (Shivam) i.e. beneficial and (Sundaram). Undoubtedly, it may be beneficial to the contemporary society but it certainly cannot be said to be Beauteous (Sundaram). The ornamentation is conspicuously

missing in an effort to touch the weeping, tearful face or realism. The ocean of pain, misery, exploitation and exposition of the maladies of human misbehavior and misadventures is replete in the poems. Even if a poem is composed by the poet “Why is Fate So Cruel to the Poor?” or he is paying a tribute to the exceptional social and humanitarian work done by Venkatachalam, Saviour of the Old, or imbued with universal thought of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ cannot help writing:

But man kills man not for food  
 Intelligence makes him narrow  
 His irrational divisions of classes –  
 colour, caste, religion,  
 language, politics, nation  
 demote love and promote hate  
 When millions die of hunger  
 trillions spent for armaments

There is no halting station in the poetic breath of Dominic which runs and runs to smash and trample the hurdles of inequality and exploitation; in an effort which seems to be constructive and brain child of the poet, at the end of the collection of poem, Dominic adverts to a humanitarian project known as “Goa Outreach-Helping Street and Slum Children in India.” Although it is not a poem, but a poetic prose directly emanating from his heart in which Dominic never forgets to take within its wings the oddities, exploitative feats of the modern societal lords who are not lesser than the feudal lords of historicity.

The climax in musings of Dominic plays with the reader in the poem “Multicultural Harmony” which is complete with seven cords of symphony – having seven parts. The poet addressees the ‘fellow beings’ and imagines ‘entire system’ to be a “grand concert / composed by the Solespirit” and further the mind of the poet manifests in the title dear to him “Multiplicity

and diversity / essence of universe / from atom to the heavens / multiculturalism reigns / this unity in diversity / makes beauty of universe.” The poem is written in trance of integral universe dawning in the heart of the poet. Oneness of the universe and integration of the creation makes the poem realist, emotive and intellectual par excellence. The didacticism, if any, is subtle and suggestive, the sensuousness is galore to be seen, smelled, listened and tasted with the open eyes as well as by closing the eyes. The tiny words of the poem rise to be flashing like the shining sun and the moon glows in the petty particles of the earth. The absolutism and wholesomeness is encapsulated in the seedlings of verbosity with gleaning the chaffs of parochialism and nepotism.

Patriotism and nationalism are the hallmarks of the poet’s mindfulness. Whenever and wherever, Dominic finds an act of valour, bravery and prowess he never lags behind to write a poem. The adventures of Indians in the space and the international borders, social service in the alleys of darkness especially in the orphanages pierce his heart to outpour. From farmers to labourers, soldiers to social workers, engineers to national builders, growth of India as a whole, all have flashes in the shape of poem. It is very difficult to name all such poems which are noteworthy as the space does not allow in the article but Dominic is certainly as man of knowledge abreast of everything happening in India as well as in the world. The cosmopolitan look and towering persona of Dominic still looks at the tiny cats, goats and sheep, who have been given enough space in his mind’s canvas.

Dominic’s multicultural symphony played with four chords is basically reflective in tone and tune. It is born on the threshold of two worlds – external and internal. The poet reflects on the world around him and registers his reactions to it

in a wishful voyage. The imaginative poet of Vinayak Krishna Gokak finds its parallel in Dominic as per the poet of his dreams in the true sense. The great litterateur writes:

A poet has not only to throw upon his window on the worlds around him and study the face of Nature, Love, Man and Human Achievement. He has also to look into his own heart, cerebral cortex and the world of his imaginations and fantasies. Poets will have to be judged by their achievements in this sphere of experience too.” (34)

To sum up my article on Dominic's multicultural musings with four cords, I would say that he is massive mirror personified in which the whole conscious world can see its facial expressions, their karmic deeds, gory trail of their cruelty, heart rending chivalry and compassion of highest order jerking tearful adieu. Dominic is ambassador of humanity who is what his poetic expressions says – nothing to conceal and nothing to hide; lofty ideals to adhere and kindness to abide.

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**Word as a Weapon: Preserving the  
Co-inhabitant Nature in  
K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason***

**Silviya Florance S. & Dr. (Mrs.) Raichel M. Sylus**

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Nature is a greatest gift of God to the mankind which should be protected with love and care. Both humans and Nature are the art work of God's hands where one cannot exist without the other. This gift which should be carefully cherished and nourished is under danger and mankind being the co-creation is solely responsible for its degradation. The awareness of saving nature is spread across through many channels among which literature is one vital means. In literature this stream is named as eco-criticism. As Thomas K. Dean defines:

Eco-criticism is a study of culture and cultural products (artworks, writings, scientific theories, etc.) that is in some way connected with the human relationship to the natural world. Eco-criticism is also a response to needs, problems, or crises, depending on one's perception of urgency. First, eco-criticism is a response to the need of humanistic understanding of our relationship with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction.

Critics of this field make humans to understand the fact that Nature is their other vital part without which survival can be strenuous. Many writings are produced to spread awareness of the danger that human may encounter if nature is left

unprotected. The environmental crises are the result of humans' disconnectedness with the natural world. People should understand the connection they have with nature. The ecocritics through their writings make the readers to once again establish the relationship with nature.

There are many wide known eco-critics like Lawrence Buell, Simon C. Estok, Harold Fromm, William Howrah, William Ruecket, and Sullen Campbell who have contributed their talent to this field of literature. In India too we have writers who have weaved beautiful eco-critical works of literature with the yarn of their knowledge. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Arundhati Roy, Ruskin Bond, Kiran Desai, and Amitav Gosh have highlighted the problems in environment through their writings.

K. V. Dominic is one such prolific writer who with indignation fights for the biggest co-inhabitant of humans pointing out their mistakes and also advising them on how to stay in harmony with Nature. He makes the readers understand the losses occurred, the one that will occur if proper measures are not taken to protect Mother Nature. Even in India where Nature is adored and worshipped there are much environmental exploitations. Dominic wants people to understand that humans and Nature co-exist and they have to take care of Nature the same way they do for them. In his book *Winged Reason*, a collection of poems, he marks the idea that earth is a home for all and all of the creation belongs to the same family. He doesn't hesitate to attack the ones who do injustice to our co-inhabitants.

There are two waves in eco-criticism as mentioned by the famous eco-critic Lawrence Buell. As Sandip Kumar Mishra

observes in the article “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature”:

The first wave ecocritics focused on nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction.... The aim of the wave was to preserve ‘biotic community’. The ecocritics of this wave apprised “the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action”. So criticism initially aimed at earth care inclined towards environmental justice issues and a ‘social ecocriticism’ that takes urban landscape as seriously as ‘natural landscape’. The second wave ecocritics inclined towards environmental justice issues and a ‘social ecocriticism’... exposes crimes of eco-injustice against society’s marginal section.... Often, the result is a critique of how our culture devalues and degrades the natural world. (64)

Dominic falls under both the waves. His poems praise Nature, explore the importance and also voices against the environmental injustice done to the Nature. He works as an intercessor in saving nature from the vile works of humans. The words which he uses to express the partial act of man towards Nature seem as if nature is pleading the readers. Through simple writing he writes about the serious issues of environmental exploitation. At the first place, he feels blessed to have Nature as a present from God but also grieves thinking about the danger that Nature may encounter.

Nature should be seen as a beautiful ornament that is adored and praised. Through his poems the poet takes an opportunity in celebrating the beauty of Nature. In the poem “Cuckoo Singing”, the poet speaks about the melodious alarm, a voice sweet like honey which wakes people up every morning. Even though there are man-made musical instruments none can match the music of Nature. This music is sweeter than the renowned musicians like Orpheus and Beethoven.

Sweetest song in Nature;  
 Sweeter than any  
 Man-made music;  
 Orpheus or Beethoven,  
 None before it.

.....

Yes, cuckoo lives  
 Singing and loving,  
 While man exists  
 Sweating and moaning (30)

The implied meaning of the poem is that Nature is a separate entity which is incomparable; it is more beautiful than man and manmade artworks. Both are the artworks of God where one lives 'singing' and 'loving' while the other doesn't live but just exist 'sweating and 'moaning'. Here it is seen that the poet has used two different words one is 'lives' and the other is 'exists', this means that true living is living and letting others to live. In that way Nature lives, providing its resources to man but man devalues Nature directly or indirectly for his use and just exists without any sympathy. Man should understand that Nature is a wonderful and marvellous artwork of God for us.

In the poem 'Nature's Bounties', the poet speaks about the beauty of Nature in crispy lines. It is a Haiku where the poet focuses on birds, flowers, celestial bodies and seasons, which is breath-taking and wonderful. The last line of the poem is like a cover that wraps the entire poem. The last line reads "God with the brush" this means that the whole of Nature is an awesome painting of God. The sun, rose, parched fields, snow-capped mountain and the multi-coloured sky are painted by his hands for man's delightful living.

Man should learn to live in peace with Nature as his boon. He should learn to use the bountiful riches of Nature without eradicating it. Everything natural is bliss. The bees hover over

the real flowers not over the artificial ones. Though humans build up so many things artificial it can never stand parallel to Nature. Dominic, in “Sleepless Nights” compares the natural with the unnatural:

The cuckoo’s lies on his God-given bed;  
 the gentle breeze always caresses him;  
 the nocturnal music lulls him throughout,  
 and his sleep is sound  
 free from cares and worries.

I lie in my concrete house,  
 fighting against the man-made heat,  
 and the dreary sound of the hot-wave fan.  
 The late and heavy supper in stomach,  
 and all such unnatural ways of life  
 take away that God’s own gift. (56)

The bird being the representative of Nature enjoys God’s gift to the fullest and is free from cares and worries. Humans on the other hand live in an unnatural world created by them and also exploit Nature in the name of using it. Assuming himself as a creator man becomes a destroyer by inventing artificial sources of survival. Exploitation of Nature for a simplified life reduces the life span of man as he cannot exist without Nature.

The poet as an ecocritic not only lauds Nature but also is worried about its destruction. Human nature is anthropocentric. They forget that they are only a part of ecology and not the whole. Anthropocene has become a dogma in human minds. This erroneous imprint will lead even the upcoming generations to an uncertain future. As Sandip Kumar asserts:

As earth’s only being, man considers himself as superior to every other organism. But ecocriticism decentres humanity’s importance to every object of environment. In ecology, man’s tragic flaw is his anthropocentric as opposed to biocentric vision, and his compulsion to conquer, harmonise, domesticate, violate, and exploit

every natural thing. Anthropocentric assumes the primacy of humans, who either sentimentalise or dominate the environment. On the other hand, Biocentric decentres humanities importance explores the complex interrelationships between the human and the nonhuman. ("Ecocriticism")

Man should correct his perspective of having superiority over his co-creation. Humans and Nature are interdependent. Exploitation of Nature may cause natural calamities which is a great threat to the whole universe. Humans' anthropocentric attitude should be changed into biocentric.

Dominic in one of the poems speaks about Nature and humans where the former is happy having done its work of helping its partner but the latter keeps exploiting it for his use. The poem "I am Just a Mango Tree" speaks about the purpose of God regarding both humankind and Nature. Every creation of God has a purpose behind it. Nature was created to help mankind and man was created to protect Nature. In this poem it is seen that the mango tree is happy that it is perfectly doing the Creator's will is relevant from the lines "I've fulfilled my Creator's plan". The following lines speak of all the goodness the tree is providing for its co-creations:

I shelter my student-friends  
 .....  
 I grow and bear fruits for others.  
 My branches are the beds for birds;  
 When night comes they sleep on my lap;  
 I drop mellow yellow fruit  
 To my beggar friend who sleeps beneath. (40)

The tree is happy by doing the fruit of service to many. Gradually the vibrant note takes a turn in the poem as the mango tree is listening to the conversation of two persons. From their talk the tree understands that it is going to be chopped. This tree which served as a cool shelter to countless

carries a complaint to God. The tree questions God saying: “Don’t I do them good as to all /... / God, why is your Man so selfish and cruel?” (41). In the beginning lines the tree mentions its Creator’s plan and the word “your man” shows that both were created by God. But this man is selfish and cruel; he wants to cut a tree which is a shelter for so many beings and build an artificial bus shed. Though the shed will protect people from the scorching sun it cannot provide them a cool shade and breeze. As discussed earlier in the poem “Sleepless Nights” man creates unnatural things and destroys God’s own gift to him.

The mango tree further asks why the humans can’t spare it as it only does good and no harm. The tree has life and they feel pain too. Through this poem the poet tries to highlight the injustice done to the Nature by the anthropocentric thinking of human. None is superior to the other. Every creation has their own right to live in this world as the world was created not for humans alone.

A similar thought of writing can be seen in the poem “On Killing a Tree” by Gieve Patel. The poet ironically gives suggestion to kill a tree and says that it is not an easy process. The lines “It takes much time to kill a tree” has an implied meaning that killing something so helpful and strong is not easy neither physically nor mentally. There are many such writers who comment on the injustice done to nature.

Dr. K. Krishnasamy analyses in his article: “Man is, after all, only one part in a huge complex life net in Nature in which everything has a certain value.” Everything has a value but humans at times devalue the other part by gradually eradicating it. Man should understand that Nature is his better half and its destruction will cause an equivalent destruction of mankind.

Ecocritics have tried their best in lending a hand to the green movement. As Krishnasamy writes:

Ecocritics tend to assume that its representation of nature has been more successful than in the truth – it has. I would like to recall the words of Elder that “Poetry becomes a manifestation of landscape and climate just as the eco system’s flora and fauna are” (55)

Dominic, as a writer is fighting a battle against the injustice done to Nature. He uses the powerful weapon ‘words’ to describe the beauty of Nature and their vitality. The earth is at the brink of destruction; if greens are destroyed the land will be barren. Everything is a cycle; if broken, may result in some damage. Through the reading of such writers one can understand the vital role that Nature plays in man’s lives. Nature being the inseparable part of human beings should be nourished and cherished as voiced by Dominic and many other writers.

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**K. V. Dominic's Poems –  
Writings on the Wall**

**Dr. Sabita Chakraborty**

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With us the common run of men the existence is bizarre laden with countless random events. Consequently while Alice was in the wonderland we humans are as it were in the blunder land. But Dominic sees into the heart of the phenomenal world. And with him the existence is an orchestra. Commonly an orchestra could be composed of something like ninety players. They play on different kinds of instruments ranging from the wind pipe, percussion and so on. In fact with Dominic the orchestra of the universe is composed of countless players such as owls and doves, cuckoos and raven, sparrows and chickens and so on. Each one of them is playing on a unique instrument different from the instruments played on by other species of the existence. Hence, there are

Bark of dogs;  
meow of cats;  
bleat of sheep;  
bray of donkeys;  
roar of lions;  
howl of fox;  
hiss of snake;  
and neigh of horse.

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Five, *Write Son, Write* 25)

While with us the roar of the lion, howl of fox and hiss of snake are bizarre notes jarring on one another with Dominic they are being played on assonant keys. Thus Dominic is a poet of the ear. He perceives a symphony generated by an orchestra of the existence. Symphony implies a harmony of apparently varied sounds. Orchestra implies the players of these different sounds. With Dominic the orchestra of the existence consists of living beings as well as lifeless objects. In Dominic's vision all things both great and small, sentient and insentient constitute the orchestra. And there is the symphony forged with the apparently bizarre notes leaping forth from different kinds of musicians playing on their varied instruments. Curiously enough each musician is himself, herself or itself made of a symphony. Dominic explains:

How rhythmic  
is your body!  
Rhythm is there  
in your breath;  
your heartbeats;  
your eyewinks;  
your walk and run;  
your chew  
and munch;

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Four, *Write Son, Write* 23)

Even every constituent of matter is musical withal.

There is rhythm  
and harmony  
in every molecule;  
every atom;

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Four, *Write Son, Write* 22)

Thus song and dance are the genesis of the existence. They are the essence of the existence. And whatever activities are manifest therefrom are basically song and dance. So any karma or activity that constitutes the phenomenal world is song and

dance in essence. This reminds an Indian reader of the OM or the primordial sound and the over mind rhythm that impels all thinking things and all objects of all thought and rolls through all things.

Common sense however speaks of an efficient cause behind any appearance. Orchestra and symphony speak of a conductor who sets the tone and the tempo of the symphony. Since the existence is infinite and since the symphony is timeless, bespeaking of the perpetual harmony no mortal being can be the conductor of the symphony of the existence. He is but God the Father. Or else the symphony of the existence reminds us of the dance of Nataraja or of Lord Shiva.

But one is apt to ask that if the existence were literally song and dance why should man suffer in the world? This is as it were the question of Sphinx. And as it were Dominic is the Oedipus to resolve the mystery.

An angel showed up before Ceadmon, the shepherd and asked him to sing in praise of God. Indeed every poet is a shepherd looking after the flock in the fold. And the poem “Write, My Son, Write” opens dramatically – God the Father commanding the poet to write whatever the God the Father tells him:

Write, my son, write.  
Write till  
I say stop.

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part One, *Write Son, Write* 21)

And God the Father addresses the mankind through his agent the poet Dominic and tells them that man alone among his creations strikes discordant notes amidst the cosmic symphony. He further adds: “... you try / dissonance at / my harmony.” (“Write, My Son, Write” Part Ten, *Write Son, Write* 29)

God the Father seems to have his fatal flaw. God the father confesses:

I risked a test  
in man's brain.  
Filled some cells  
with seeds  
of knowledge.  
Alas Vainglorious  
he thinks  
the master  
of all wisdom;  
tries to conquer  
the universe  
landed on the moon,  
sent satellite  
to the Mars;  
he takes it  
greatest feat!

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Nine, *Write Son, Write* 27)

Thus God the Father in this poem “Write, My Son, Write” becomes a tragic character.

God the father laments:  
I breathed in him  
celestial values;  
happiness, beauty,  
peace, love, mercy;  
but he fosters  
hate and violence;  
kills his kith and kin;  
shows no mercy  
to animals and plants.

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Nine, *Write Son, Write* 28)

God gave free will to man and breathed into him higher values. Man has been wasting the gift of God by ceaselessly doing the wrong thing. The existence is a symphony on n levels. Trees and plants, the inanimate natures, the birds and animals

and worms and all living things must exist in harmony with one another. God the father warns:

Your species  
can't live alone.  
Cattle, sheep,  
goats, donkeys,  
dogs, cats,  
swine, fowl,  
I created  
for your company;  
neither can they  
exist without you.

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Seven, *Write Son, Write* 26)

But man does not pay heed to the warnings of God. Man does not have the ear for the divine language in which Nature speaks, driven by egoistic hedonism. He seems to shatter the plan of creation. Dominic here seems to propound the teleological interpretation of existence to which man is blind and deaf. If we survey the whole poetical works of Dominic we will perceive a sequence of case studies of what man has made of man and made of his environment. Indeed man is on the verge of the destruction. Human civilisation struts and frets on a stage raised from the ground by the mountain of nuclear weapons. Any moment it might vanish into smoke.

And what does God the Father exhort to man through his messiahs, Dominic being one of them? Cataracts of compassion must burst upon the mind set of man. The poem “Write, My Son, Write” ends with the exhortation:

If they heed  
They will be saved;  
other beings  
will be saved;  
plants will be saved  
and the universe  
as such will be saved.

(“Write, My Son, Write” Part Twenty One, *Write Son, Write* 37)

Is not Dominic the Daniel who reads the writings on the wall?

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**K. V. Dominic –  
The Poet, Poetry, Poetic Vision**  
Sheeba Ramadhevan

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K. V. Dominic's poems are like showers from white clouds that fall aptly at the "meanest flowers" and the most mundane little things, which mostly remain unheeded. They shower light equally on the unnoticed wail of a little puppy and at the greatness of great people like Lord Buddha and the underlying emotion is entangled with love, humanity and sympathy.

Simplicity being the key note of his writings, it may aptly be said that his creations are beautiful fairies in the attire of simplicity and when these angelic forms hum, we can hear the harmonious rhythm of poetic elegance at par excellence. And they, at times assume the form of robins and cuckoos and when they chirp with sonorous musical notes, we hear the unheard chats of all flora and fauna, around us. When we go through the lines, we can find that it is with the clarity of the freshness of a child, the poet's thought process takes place and the Blake in him outpours with the gentle assurance that all the creations of God have the same rights here on earth. When a cat or a small bird is hurt, the poet himself is hurt and his empathy becomes that of the reader too, forever through his eternal lines.

While going through the poems “A Sheep’s Wail”, Anand’s Lot” “Teresa’s Tears” and “Lal Salam to Labour” we can hear there is a Buddha in him, there is a mother Theresa in him and the Marx in him seems to be the major part. Just see how the “Musings from an Infant’s Face” goes on like this:

poor and low caste,  
discriminations,  
humiliations,  
abuses and tortures,  
will come in battalions  
to give her  
Guard of Honour  
and lead her along  
the brambly path...

and in “Resolution” we can visualise the woman, who is the sole solace to her three daughters and her bed-ridden father and mother,

standing on a bamboo ladder,  
a score feet high,  
shaming men she’s  
felling thorny branches

Yes, she earns the respect of the readers, for “dignity and self-respect, she takes as greatest wealth” and one can recognise that by felling the branches, she is successfully cutting down the thorny twigs of her unfortunate lot, shedding away the darkness creeping perpetually into her life. Thus, the felling of the thorny branches symbolises the self-devoted, hard earned success over the burdens getting dumped up on and on her life by the cruel fate.

“Rocketing Growth of India” is a thought provoking satire, where the poet observes:

First in population growth  
first in number of poor;

top in ignorance and illiteracy;  
top in superstitions and fundamentalism;  
very low standard of living;  
Rocketing growth of the rich;  
Express growth of the poor  
multifold growth of their gap.

Also, we can't shut our eyes against "Teresa's Tears", where  
the helpless Teresa

counting currency  
again and again  
tears running  
like a brook.

Daya Bai, the very name which evokes and makes us think  
that "Virtue still prevails" is the incarnation of kindness and  
f forbearance, who truly illustrates by her own life that,

serving God in human form  
is more rewarding than  
serving Him in abstract terms.

The poet's love for nature is explicitly seen in the poem  
"Wagamon". The "exotic wild beauty", where the "tall and thick  
pine trees support firmament from falling", where the eternal  
Painter of scenic beauty oozed white paint from His brush and  
the cataracts flow from fall just before our eyes, with heavenly  
elegance. The poet delineates the scene in simple lines and "lifts  
our mind to an eternal abode of repose".

"From Lamb to Wolf" is just an eye-opener to all the  
fanatics. The poet asks: "Isn't service to man service to God?  
Isn't service to animals and plants service unto Him?"

The very beginning of the poem "Nostalgia for  
Childhood" gives us wings to return to the childhood days again  
and recapture the innocent joyous days:

How much I bathed in joy both in rain and sunlight!  
Alas! Gone are those golden days of my life  
Only innocent childhood savours Nature's happiness

And the poem finally ends in rhetorical questions: "Haven't we destroyed Nature and environment and made uncongenial for our children to survive?" The poem "I can hear the Groan of Mother Earth" too conveys the same message to stop the atrocities against Nature. The heart-rending cries of the birds and animals may be heard by many, but the sensitive soul of the poet feels the intense helpless lament as his own pain.

I can hear the death cry of bird after bird  
when they cut their feeding trees  
to make their selfish life more luxurious

The poem "Palam Kalyanasundaram – Role Model for Humanity" is almost of prosaic structure which ends in a philosophical query: "what do we take with us when we leave planet earth?" It seems that the poet had become too overwhelmed with respect for the great man that in a haste he has written it with less poetic devices. "Silence! Silence! Grave Silence!" depicts the true picture of modern families, where "dad is drowned in Facebook, Mom buried in WhatsApp" and "None speaks to none". The fourth line "Sleep fears to enter" reminds us of the proverb "fools rush in where Angels fear to tread in".

An innocent boy's anxieties shared with his Grandpa in "Pricking Questions from the Grandson" is a picture of the uncertainty of the imminent future awaiting the humanity:

I even doubt how long  
I can row the boat  
against huge tsunamies  
rushing to gulp me

which promptly foretells the horrifying fate, the aftermath of man's own cruelty towards the nature.

Going through the poems of K. V. Dominic we would feel that it is true with Kant when he stated that the poet, “transgressing the limits of experience, attempts with the aid of imagination to body forth the rational ideas to sense with a completeness of which nature affords no parallel”.

**K. V. Dominic's Poetry:  
The Mirror of Reality and  
Concern for Values**

**Kasturi Siva Prasad**

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Dr. K. V. Dominic, a popular writer, critic, editor and poet is professor, sagacious, foresighted, eco-friendly and humanitarian that gives a graphic description of the events he has witnessed in day to day life. He craves for the restoration of values the present society has lost.

Being one of the avid readers of Dr. Dominic's poetry, I would like to keep before the readers the following facts I have found.

He is a poet of simple, effective and point blank expression which enables the reader to comprehend his theme. I have chosen two anthologies of his for my study. They are *Cataracts of Compassion* and *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*. *Cataracts of Compassion*, published in 2018, contains thirty four poems. All of them cascade from his pen to enlighten us through his experience as what is empirical is more valuable than what is theoretical.

The first poem titled 'Enlighten us Lord Buddha' keeps apparent before the readers his poetic flow and expression,

metaphysical, metaphorical and of free verse. The lines 'You are the sun among / all-stars of seers', 'A miracle to others / you practised samadhi / and developed jnana / even in infancy', 'Realised worthlessness / of sensual pleasures / Prompted him to renounce world'. 'None follows your / exemplary model', 'Compassion is alien / in families among siblings' reveal his concern for humanitarian values and the lines 'Servants are treated / worse than animals', 'Developed countries / are indifferent to / millions dying of hunger / in other states', 'Hence enlighten us Lord Buddha / and fill all human minds / with love and compassion' reveal his compassion.

His merciful heart warns us against karma of killing, the root cause of all suffering and cause of all sickness and war destruction of any creature being disturbance of universal order.

The poem on Mahasweta Devi is his glowing tribute to a popular poetess that strove hard for the poor and the oppressed. His appreciation of her poetry reveals his plain hearted mind, admirable for all the poets of the present age.

His value abiding personality can be clear to the discerning readers of each one of thirty four poems. His sympathising with the poor can be felt when the reader is immersed in the reading of the poems titled 'African Poverty', 'Angels as Refugees' and 'Housemaids' Dreams'.

The following lines of the above poems within inverted commas testify to his sympathising with the poor: "... children, women / old stretch their hands with begging bowls" ('African Poverty') "Sea has saved thousands already / from their poverty and miseries / pulling down as toppled from boats / How heart-rending is their wail from boats: ('Angels as Refugees') "Poor people are destined to dream and dream / while rich fulfil what they dream and deserve" ('Housemaid's Dreams')

His love for animals can be felt in the poems like 'Bapooty's Onam Feast to Stray Dogs', 'Dogs' Curse on Human Beings', 'Rosy Dog is Waiting', 'Wails of Mosquitoes and Elephants' and 'What's Wrong with Me'. The following lines of the poems are worth observing: "Bapooty serves a model / how to deal with manmade issues / caused by stray dogs and cats" ('Bapooty's Onam Feast to Stray Dogs') "Mind you, this world is / not your prandpas" ('Dogs' Curse on Human Beings') "Rosy's love to her masters / a role model to all sons and daughters" ('Rosy Dog is Waiting') He straight away asks society about the marginalised and neglected through the poems like 'Circus Rani, Queen of Woes', and 'I am an Indian Young Widow'.

The lines 'Where will she go and who will take her as bride?', 'Hellish is the life of an Indian widow / Tragic and nightmarish if she is young' touch the heart of the reader.

His concern for environment is felt in the poems 'Endosulfan Tragedy', 'I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth' and his love for nature is vivid in his poems 'Musings on the Killings of a Tiger', 'No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds and 'Pricking Questions from the Grandson'.

'Endosulfan Tragedy' hits out at negligence of government through its biting remarks: "government of the people, by the people / and for the people, proved against the people!"

We can hear the groan of the poet through his poem 'I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth'. He lays stress on the protection of the winged, the wild, the flowery and the fruit bearing which form a part of the Environment.

The poet through his poem 'Musings on the Killings of a Tiger' feels as if he were the tiger being killed. The following

lines of the poem are heart melting: "How devilishly man netted and stoned it to death".

'No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds' faults Man's capacity that has irrevocably destroyed Nature'. The lines "Natural dense forests are swept away / to create concrete buildings and townships / How can there be any repair? / No balm can cure Nature's wounds" are most realistic and striking.

That the poet is beyond religion is crystal clear through his point blank expression in the poems 'From Lamb to Wolf', 'Irrational Discriminations', 'Jesus Views on Heaven' and 'When Religion Plays Upper Hand'. The following lines in 'From Lamb to Wolf' mirror the poet's impartiality and human values: "How can God, epitome of love, be pleased / by violence and bloodshed in his name?"

He makes a sharp attack against dishonest clergy, casteist, religious and creedal discrimination.

The poet juxtaposes Jesus and the Buddha in his 'Jesus Views on Heaven' in the following manner: "Jesus ascertains that Heaven is neither / above nor below but in our minds". The poet finds fault with the cunning and greedy human being and questions rationality behind his killing fellow human beings.

He champions the cause of Journalists through his concern over the death of Journalist in his poem 'Murder of Freedom of Expression' and at the same time he feels very sad at immorality deepening its roots even in the field of journalism. The poem in search of impartial reports makes it clear.

His concerns for children's well-being, spiritual values and genuine criticism of man's indifference to Nature are out and out appreciable 'Haven't we destroyed Nature and environment / and made uncongenial for our children to survive?"

(‘Nostalgia for Childhood’), “What do we take with us when we leave planet earth?” (‘Palam Kalyanasundaram – Role model for Humanity’), “... serfdom is happier than freedom / It’s better to live in ignorance like slaves / than live a hellish life of feebly witnessing / others’ sorrows... ” (‘Serfdom is Happier than Freedom’)

‘Silence! Silence!! Grave silence!!!’ opens the eyes of a self-immured man. ‘Victory of Fight for Water’, ‘Triplets of Wisdom’, ‘What is Spirituality’ and ‘What is Wrong with Me’ accentuate service to God-created beings as real service to God.

Thus the anthology titled *Cataracts of Compassion* adds mirror upto reality and Professor Dominic’s concern for values, the heart and soul of society. The anthology is a must read one for all.

Another anthology one must read to know about the need of value based society is Dr. Dominic’s *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* published in 2016. The poet’s concern is about the values that are fast vanishing.

The anthology is of thirty seven poems followed by some haikus. The poet does not leave any topic of human life unaddressed. Each value ranging from environment to spirituality is accentuated in his poems.

While addressing the people and their problems through his poetry, he feels as if he were one of the affected and victimised. The first poem titled ‘Salute to Farmers’ touches each and every aspect of poor and innocent farmers’ lives and keeps before us the way of farmers being hoodwinked and their becoming scapegoats at the hands of the bad weather and the cunning people. The following lines are worth noting: “Outcome of their sweat / looted by the mafias / and they

starve and cultivate / to feed nation's parasites / Numbers of their suicides / increase year after year."

The lines from 'A Cremator's Struggle for Existence' "three to six hours / Medicine addict bodies need longer hours / kith and kin of body leave / once cremation fuel is ignited" demystify the nature of kith and kin the moment soul leaves the body.

The poems titled 'Aboobaker, Poor Patients' Saviour', 'Murukan, God of Beggars', 'Nadarajan, the Ideal Neighbour' and 'Salute to Soldiers' reveal his nature of appreciating the worthy. The lines "Closed his profitable hardware shop and / chose this as his divine vocation", "True, Murugan reigns as god in hundred's minds", "Nadarajan's exalted exemplary action / is the real Karma which can motivate / in the thickly populated exploited State", "Their lives pledged for the state / Ever ready to sacrifice lives / Proud to be martyrs of the country" are worth noting in this regard.

The poet warns the pro-capitalist government that Maoists are never born but are made where injustice rules. The poem titled 'Beggars and Animals' gives a naked account of the beggars whose lives are comparable with those of animals and birds. The poem 'Child Trafficking' keeps before us the miserable conditions that compel innocent and poor parents to sell their children. Dr. Dominic sharply criticises those who are responsible for their wretched condition in the following words: "How can man be cruel like this! / Non-human beings always love their off springs and / protect them from all dangers / Human being refined being / proves often debased being!"

The poem titled 'Departure without Any Label' is the frank account of Dr. Dominic's mind. The last lines of the poem are worth noting "There shall be no prayers or rites / Nor burial in

church yard or ugly vault / Let it be burned up at public crematorium / I came to this earth without any label”.

The poem ‘Eating Gives Bliss’ unfolds the truth that appeasing hunger of animals and birds is appeasing that of the fellow human beings and that it gives us happiness.

The poet in his ‘Ecological Debt Day’ expresses his concern over ecological imbalance. The poem ‘Flower Vendor’ describes dowry as an arch villain that stands as stumbling block in the matter of an unmarried daughter. According to the poet, nature is the best teacher.

‘Mahadeva Prasad, Saviour of Deserted Girls’ accounts for a home of love and happiness in a manner, crystal clear. ‘Maternal Attachment’ gives a detailed account of importance of mother. Maternal love in the poet’s words is inexpressible, indefinable, unfathomable, immaculate, eternal and divine.

The lines “Trees, forests, hills, / rivers, lakes and wet lands / bathed you in refreshing rain / Maintained healthy temperature / Your wicked sons shaved off” from the poem ‘Mother India I Weep’ is the indicator of the fluttering heart of the poet. The last three lines of the poem ‘Parental Duty’ are worth remembering by every parent: “Never dig your grave as Dhritarashtra did / Best is to be models to your children / Leading lives of dharma and karma”. At the same time the poet reprimands the children that desert their parents in old age.

The poet asks us how parents can be spat out like curry leaves. He argues in a justifiable manner that deserting them is like selling cattle when they are old and useless to the slaughter houses of Kerala. He warns us that today’s children will reap the consequences tomorrow after they become old as life is a vicious cycle.

The poem 'Servants Assume Masters' clearly holds corruption responsible for all evils that tarnish our country's image. Let us look at the following lines: "It is our curse here / bribes and grafts rule service". The poems 'Tearful Exodus', 'Tribute to SAI Sanctuary' and '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' lay stress on nature being protected and plants and animal world being conserved as part of ecological balance.

The poem entitled 'What is Karma' unfolds the secret of salvation. The following lines are worth noticing: "Tapas can drive any Greed; / need not go to the Himalayas; / meditation in one's room is enough". The poet asks us not to allow negative emotions to envelope us. He appeals through haikus spread from page 57 to 60 to be eco-friendly, pure in mind, kind hearted and unselfish to keep the universe pollution free.

Thus both *Cataracts of Compassion* and *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* mirror reality and Dr. Dominic's concern about our future and for values that enliven us.

**The Concerns of a Sensitive Poet:  
K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion***

**S. Pathmanathan (Sopa)**

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The theme of K. V. Dominic's recent collection of poems is compassion. And what is compassion? A feeling of pity for someone who is undergoing suffering. It is far, far deep and meaningful than the oft-abused word 'love'. It is a feeling of intense pity that encompasses the world of all living things. I am no Sanskrit pundit but I have a hunch that '*Kārunya*' (or *Karuna* in Tamil) may come closer in meaning to compassion. Casting aside hair-splitting abstractions, it is easier to illustrate by showing someone who is compassionate. In a predominantly Buddhist country like Sri Lanka, Lord Buddha is referred to, simply, as 'the Compassionate One'. The serene figure of a saint carrying a lame goat in the midst of a frenzied crowd driving herds to the sacrificial altar is more powerful than the pious sermons we hear in temples and churches. Dominic writes:

Barefooted and bareheaded  
ascetic Gotama walked on and on  
Neither scorching sun  
nor piercing cold  
could detract him  
from the search for truth...

("Enlighten us Lord Buddha")

Dominic concludes his long poem with an invocation to Lord Buddha:

You taught us to show  
equal care and compassion  
to all creatures of the world  
Destruction of any creature  
is disturbance of universal order  
Hence enlighten the world, Lord Buddha,  
and fill this planet with peace and happiness

Note: it is not just love for fellow human beings that Buddha spoke or Dominic echoes. Many a Buddhist sermon would conclude with the following Pali canon:

‘Sathve sathva bavantu suki sathva’  
And the Hindu Priest would chant:  
‘Lōkā samasthā sukino bavantu’  
The essence of all these prayers/wishes is:  
‘Let all living things be happy!’

The exploited and the downtrodden often figure in Dominic’s poems. Rani who joined the Rainbow Circus Company at the tender age of eight is now in her twenties. She has been performing ‘flying trapeze’, acrobatics, acrobalance and the wheel of death. The tent is her world. She is growing old. Her body is no longer supple. She can no longer perform the feats in which she once excelled. She has to leave the Company. Where can she go? She has no one in the world. Who will take her for a bride? No answers.

Debopriya is a housemaid who spends all day, dreaming. She dreams of a husband who will be as good and loving as her master. She dreams of a cute son and a house where they all will live. Having listed her dreams, Dominic rudely shakes the reader into reality:

Poor people are destined to dream and dream  
while the rich fulfill what they dream and desire

(“A Housemaid’s Dream”)

A family is society in a miniature form. It is there that the child is prepared for life. Do we provide our children with a healthy environment that moulds them to be useful citizens of tomorrow? Grandparents are buried in Holy books. Mom and dad are buried in WhatsApp and Face book. No interaction among family members. If a child approaches an adult he meets with an injunction 'Don't disturb me!' The house is like a haunted house, members having their meals by the clock and going to bed mechanically ("Silence! Silence!! Grave Silence!!!"). It is in this context that children have a number of questions. A toddler asks his grandpa:

Grandpa, what have you left  
for me or my siblings to be born?  
Polluted is air I breathe  
and toxic is food you serve me  
.....  
How can I survive here?

(“Pricking Questions from the Grandson”)

But K. V. Dominic's concerns are much wider than individuals or families. I would call him a poet turned environmentalist. He reacts to the wanton harm done to our environment by Man. The specter of the Bhopal tragedy haunts India. The poet can hear the groan of Mother Earth. The milk of her mountain breasts (i.e. rivers) is sucked. Her hair-like trees are felled, the forests ate, destroyed and wild animals driven away eventually to meet starvation and death. Man is insensitive to the death-cry of birds who have lost their habitat. Dominic concludes the poem with a curse by Mother Earth:

Man, I can hear Mother Earth cursing you  
As Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna'

(“I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth”)

It's a wonderful simile. Gandhari was the mother of the Gauravas, a hundred in all who perished in Kurukshetra. The

wail of that mother is like a postscript to the Mahabharata – nay, to all wars!

Dominic’s compassion extends to animals, birds and reptiles. His “Musings on the Killing of Tiger” reminds me of an incident that happened in Sri Lanka a few months ago. A young leopard had strayed into the village. A few youths clubbed it and stoned it to death. On top of it, they photographed their brutal act and posted it on Face Book! The callous act was condemned by animal lovers and conservationists.

Elephants are endangered and face extinction. In a small island like Sri Lanka, 68 elephants have been killed this year by poachers, by trains and by electrocution. Why does this happen? Man has deprived them of their habitat by clearing the forests in the name of agriculture! Dominic writes:

Why do you drive us back  
to the forest? Elephants wail  
.....  
Our habitats are destroyed  
Roads are made through them  
Vehicles hit us and kill  
Their horns pierce our ears  
Hunger’s call leads us to your farms  
that were once our pastures

(“Wails of Mosquitoes and Elephants”)

The havoc wreaked by multinational companies on the third world is monstrous. Union Carbide left Bhopal a mini Hiroshima. The poet exposes, with adequate details, how Coca Cola robbed Plachimada in Kerala of precious water by sinking bore wells. The Company made billions as profits while the waste made the old and the young sick. Paddy fields turned waste lands. Women had to walk kilometers to fetch drinkable water.

Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion* focuses on burning contemporary issues. It reflects the concerns of a very sensitive writer. It is disturbing but real. If poetry can serve as a tool for social change, if poetry can make the reader think, then this modest collection goes a long way in that direction.

**Contemporary Social Issues in  
the Poetic Corpus of K. V. Dominic's  
*Cataracts of Compassion***

**Dr. Sugandha Agarwal**

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This review article attempts to present the burning contemporary issues in the poetic collection of K.V. Dominic who is a renowned English Poet, Critic, Short Story writer and Editor. He is an internationally acclaimed poet with more than 30 books to his credit including poetry anthologies, short story collections and critical interpretations of his poems. He is a versatile poet who composed poems beautifully with clarity and simplicity. He seems as a voice of India: voice of Downtrodden, voice of Animals, voice of Nature, voice of Widow, voice of Spirituality, voice of silence, Voice of Poverty, Voice of Democracy, voice of humanity, voice of religion and many more.

The first poem of K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion* is "Enlighten us Lord Buddha" in which the poet requests to Lord Buddha to radiate wisdom rays to diminish darkness of ignorance from the earth. He raised multiple real issues in his first poem and simultaneously prays to God for the enlightenment of compassion, patience, love, sincerity, empathy, and honesty.

Enlighten us Lord Buddha  
radiating rays of wisdom  
to our minds groping in darkness  
You are the sun among  
all stars of seers who  
lived on this planet  
Lord Buddha, you are  
most purified man

*(Cataracts of Compassion 15)*

Dominic has a purified heart and soul who feels pity and anger for the irresponsible, selfish and ungrateful children of the newfangled world who leave their parents in their old age:

Children who know  
very well how they  
were loved and reared  
desert their parents  
when old and weak  
Leave them in  
old age homes,  
hospitals, jungles  
buses and trains  
Compassion is alien (18)

Dominic is a true patriot who always ponders on the current social issues and articulates his sentiments painfully on the critical situations of the nation. He expressed worry on the critical situation of religious aspects in India. The communal riots and massacres in the name of sacred religion are really ridiculous and painful. He remarked:

There are man-made religions  
and man-made gods here  
falsely claiming salvation of people  
and looting their hard earned income  
Instead of unifying people spiritually  
religions create divisions and  
make the laity biased and narrow minded  
Claiming superiority over others

religions blind people and lead  
to communal riots and massacres (20)

The poet also reminds us for the right direction suggested to humanity by Lord Buddha in the below mentioned words:

You taught also the eight-fold path  
right view, right aspiration, right speech,  
right action, right livelihood, right effort,  
right mindfulness and right concentration(21)

The poet also highlighted the condition of women in the society and Lord Buddha's opposition for the same. Dominic has precisely mentioned various social evils like oppression of women, slavery, torture of animals which were questioned and reformed by Lord Buddha:

You raised status of oppressed women  
Tried to abolish slavery and banned  
sacrifice of unfortunate animals" (22)

In the last stanza of this long poem, K. V. Dominic seems to direct society to pursue the path of truth, honesty, idealism, love, joy, tranquility, equality and excellence which was shown to mankind by Lord Buddha:

Your taught us to show  
equal care and compassion  
to all creatures of this world  
Destruction of any creature  
is disturbance of universal order (23)

It is well known that we may learn a lot from the biographies of the great people or the literary and poetic pieces of prolific writers may also alter our life in the positive way. Dominic too is very much inspired by the poetic world of fantabulous poetess Mahasweta Devi who wrote on countless social issues. Dominic also raised various controversial, social topics through his pen and he noticed the same in the poems of

the great poetess and remarked with enormous zeal for Mahasweta Devi:

Didi, you were the crusader of the downtrodden  
tribals, dalits, women, landless, migrants, prostitutes...  
Didi, you are role model to all writers in the world  
(“A Poetic Tribute to Mahasweta Devi” 24)

K. V. Dominic's heart weeps when he sees wastage of food in high class parties when poor people are not able to make their both ends meet. The elite and affluent people are so indifferent to the crucial condition of the poverty stricken people. He screams:

How can the rich and rich countries  
waste their excess food  
when their wretched siblings  
cry for just a meal a day?  
When will the rich have prick of conscience  
for hoarding poor's share and wealth  
and starving them to die?  
(“African Poverty” 26)

Dominic is a true philanthropist who articulated his agony through his poems for stray animals specially dogs in the streets. He complains that people care for their pets but maltreat with stray dogs:

Cruelty thy name is man  
You have made your pets  
stray dogs struggling for life  
(“Dogs Curse on Human Beings” 32)

The poet declared and reminds people that animals have same right to survive as human beings:

Mind you, this world is  
not your grandpas'  
We too have a right  
as all other animals have

to live and share  
its sustaining wealth

(“Dogs Curse on Human Beings” 33)

Dominic ponders over the statistics of so called developing and democratic India where more than 70% people are suffering from poverty, hunger, illness, malnutrition, unemployment, illiteracy, and discrimination. So he is asking through his poem where equality exists in this democratic India:

Seventy percent of Indians live in villages  
Seventy five percent of rural India  
lives on thirty three rupees per day  
India’s richest one percent holds  
fifty eight percent of country’s total wealth  
Fifty seven billionaires in India  
keep equal wealth of the entire villagers  
Wherein lies the so called equality?  
Yet India is the largest democracy in the world

(“Equality in India” 35)

Dominic’s views are immensely productive and it brings reform in the society. It is really out of imagination and quite unbelievable from a male person of this modern world who bothers for a housemaid’s dreams and aspirations. He has feeling of empathy in his blood and now it has become the voice of his personality. He writes about the maid Debopriya who is a babysitter and she daily questions to herself when she observes the pleasant and joyous atmosphere of the place where she works whole day:

Debopriya spends all day in dreams  
Her master appears as ideal couple  
Debopriya daily asks her innerself:  
Will I get a good husband like him?  
Will I have a married life at all?  
Will I bear a cute son like Vishnu?  
Can I have a good house as this?

(“Housemaid’s Dreams” 38)

These above mentioned lines can easily move the heart of any person and it also shows the inner state of housemaids. They should be treated with gentle behaviour as:

Poor people are destined to dream and dream  
while rich fulfill what they dream and desire  
(“Housemaid’s Dreams” 38)

The poet is really a social reformer who is trying hard to bring soothing change in the prevalent orthodox system of society. The soft heart of Dominic weeps with the sobs of Indian widow in the below mentioned words:

Alas I have to row all alone now  
And sea has become more violent  
No glimpse of any terminus now  
With none to help from both our families  
how will I survive with my little ones?...  
Hellish is the life of an Indian widow  
Tragic and nightmarish if she is young  
Patriarchy doesn’t allow her to survive  
Eagles fly over her wherever she goes  
When she craves for love and sympathy  
society rends her bleeding heart  
shooting arrows of repulsive words  
Curses hurl on her from in-law’s house  
Burden for her parents and brothers  
(“I am an Indian Young Widow” 40)

The poet is a true lover of Nature which reminds readers the famous poet William Wordsworth who loves Nature like his mother. The unstoppable rolling tears from the eyes of Mother Earth filled Dominic with intolerable pain and his mighty pen again starts jotting down innermost sentiments:

I can hear the groan of mother earth  
being raped by her own beloved human sons  
having sucked all milk from her mountain breasts  
quarry deep out of construction mania  
(“I Can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth” 41)

He articulated his love for Nature in his another poem also and here he calls Nature a teacher:

Nature is the best teacher  
Modest and humble man  
learn eternal truths from it  
Plants and trees exhilarated

(“Lessons from Fruit Plants” 47)

He also remarked with anger that the destructive and selfish way of modern people destroying Nature is unpardonable and if we still continue our unwanted intervention in the cycle of Nature then we would have to bear the disastrous consequences:

Nature dense forests are swept away  
To create concrete buildings and townships  
How can there be any repair?  
No balm can cure Nature’s wounds

(“No Balm can Cure Nature’s Wounds” 52)

The poet also expresses his irresistible love for animals in his poetry. He is also worried about the vanishing species of some wild peculiar animals. His heart is moved with the shrieks of these innocent animals:

I can hear the scream of elephants, tigers,  
boars, snakes and all wild animals  
when they drive them from their homes  
and starve to death by burning forests

(“I Can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth” 41)

He also attacks on the low mentality of people who promote caste system and create havoc in the society in the name of religion. He writes with sarcasm that the colour of the blood is same of all the people of this whole world, but even then we are segregated in different castes and religions. But if urgent blood will be required in any case of emergency then at

that time all discrimination will disappear. Then what is the point of sticking on fighting with each other for religion?:

Aren't your bodies same once skin is removed?  
Isn't same red coloured blood passing through  
Whites, Blacks, Brahmins and Shudras?  
Aren't your organs and functions same in all human beings?

.....

When you need urgent blood for your ailing body  
your irrational discrimination disappears  
Kindly learn basics of your universe  
Variety and multicultural unity  
beauty of your sustaining universe

(“Irrational Discriminations” 43)

Dominic is a child by heart and sometimes to steal some moments of peace he wishes to go again to his childhood. He compares between the childhood which he experienced and the childhood which is lived by modern children of 21<sup>st</sup> century. He pointed out the main differences between them and aspires to go back to that age:

I long to go backward to my childhood  
Run hither and thither on the vast

.....

Alas! Gone are those golden days of my life  
Only innocent childhood savours Nature's happiness  
Children find all beings their equals and companions  
They feel excited when drenched and sweated

(“Nostalgia for Childhood” 53)

The poet not only pointed out the problems but simultaneously suggested some solutions also as he told the way to please God:

God will not be pleased  
By applause and noisy prayers  
But by nishkam karma

(“Triplets of Wisdom” 60)

Dominic also expresses his worry for the health of people. He writes about the crucial situation of how the junk and adulterated food spoiling the health of people and the soft drinks of renowned companies are the big health hazards for human beings. He boldly writes:

Multinational giant Coca Cola Company  
allures entire world and sinks in pernicious  
cauldron of caffeine, sugar and aspartame

(“Victory of Fight for Water” 63)

The poet has multifaceted quality of writing and he has covered almost all the issues of human life in his poetry. He also comments on the fake spirituality:

What is spirituality?  
Worshipping God  
in abstract terms  
and spending time  
in temples, mosques  
churches, synagogues  
gurudwaras etc. or  
doing real services  
through words and actions  
to your fellow beings  
including non-human  
and plant world?

(“What is Spirituality?” 66)

Dominic also writes about religions’ trap on human beings from birth to grave. He expressed beautifully that when a baby takes birth all feel happy and then when it is sent to school, it is educated and trained to fight for religion:

Mother Earth rejoices when  
she gives birth to a new child...  
A newborn child is a joy forever  
for parents, relatives and humanity  
All wish it grow gentle and loving  
Family, society and nation...

It is a pity when religion plays  
upper hand on children and youth  
secularism and patriotism is  
devoured by religious fanaticism

(“When Religion Plays Upper Hand” 68)

In the nutshell, it can be said that Dominic could not resist himself in depicting the state of his mind and heart on the piece of paper in the form of poetry. His unparalleled poetic composition includes all mind boggling themes of the current scenario like poverty, religious exploitations, environmental issues, corruption, social evils, terrorism, cruelty to women, children, old and sick, animals, gender discriminations etc. Through this literary gem *Cataracts of Compassion* K. V. Dominic presents prevailing problems in the society with solutions and emphasized on the significance of “Nishkam Karma” which is the remedy of all problems in today’s world.

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## The Stunning Aspects of K.V. Dominic's Poetry

Dr. Y. Vidya

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K. V. Dominic is one of the major poets in the millennium era. There are some existential strains in K. V. Dominic's poetry. Existentialism is based on man's feeling and experience and flouts all systems based on reason and abstraction. It lays stress on concreteness and individuality. K. V. Dominic does introduce irony in a very subtle fashion, maintaining the serious one. K. V. Dominic unequivocally spoke against inequality and misery in the world. He delineates in "African Poverty" (*Cataracts of Compassion*) thus:

When will the rich have prick of conscience  
for hoarding poor's share and wealth  
and starving them to die?

(Lines 18-20)

There is a feeling in his poetry of sharing attitudes and experiences, joys, despairs and suffering. He thus, in the "Triplets of Wisdom" (*Cataracts of Compassion*) observes:

When grief enters  
Talk to a tree  
You will be solaced

(Lines 34-36)

His poetry sometimes moves on the ethical level. Two kinds of irony seem to operate in the poetry of K. V. Dominic. One closely allied to satire, where he stands at a distance from the object looked at, the other closely allied to compassion, where he examines the experience as if from within.

Kerala has become central to Dominic's poetic thought and an integral part of his poetics. His treatment of imagery in "Multicultural Kerala" (*Multicultural Symphony*) is competent and thought provoking:

My native State Kerala  
 blessed with equable climate  
 and alluring landscape  
 crowned by the Sahyas  
 She lies on the lap of Arabian Sea  
 Multitudes of brooks and rivers  
 flow through her veins  
 Thousands of species of flora and fauna  
 Six months long rainy season  
 followed by summer bearable  
 Autumn and winter fear to enter  
 Tourists call it God's own Country

(Lines 1-12)

The commitment to 'self' and the State of his living (i.e., Kerala) helps him to create central images like those of his hero, the city and the women. The images of 'Kerala' pervade through his poetry. The changing reality of love and the human relationship on the one hand of the unchanging contours of Indian landscape on the other, are as it were the spiritus mundi from where he draws all his images.

Some poems are marked by strain of philosophical humanism. In Dominic's created world, art, philosophy and religion are intermingled. Originality in art has a metaphysical dimension and a quality of transcendence which is also very

natural in its making. There is the world of poetry and art and second, there is the larger world of reality and facts. He treats the landscape and its forms in various ways. His poetry is concerned with the exploration of values. This awareness is achieved but only after reaching a particular point of illumination when the poet is able to discriminate and choose. This need of commitment is as urgent as is the need to express oneself with moral certitude.

Poetry is an imaginative reconstruction of reality and images are of vital significance in this regard. They unravel the poet's area of associations, demonstrate his ability to conceive fresh and evocative figures and create a varied and rich pattern of meanings in the complex form of poetry. He is a poet of plain truths and simple observations. Although he takes a philosophical stance at times, most often he is content to be descriptive and narrative relying on bare matter of fact statements. It is apparent that there is a juxtaposition of the two worlds of images in the poetic corpus of K. V. Dominic. At one extreme, we find the dark world and the other; there is the resplendent Nature symbolic of essential vigour, vitality and innocence. Indeed, these are the obsessive images in the poetry of K. V. Dominic. These two sets of images, representing two sets of values in contradiction to each other, are the basic constituents of the poet's search for meaning in life and poetry. In fact, they achieve the widest possible connotations and symbolic status in the poetry of K. V. Dominic,

It has been characteristic habit of K. V. Dominic that he executed several allied images along with the principal one in order to highlight the central contour. The poet is torn between the demands of time and that of his self. Dominic's city is basically an Indian one and it has hardly any affiliation with the continental cities. The distress of living in a city is a common

experience everywhere. The city being more than an image is transformed into a symbol of decomposed garbage, a space infected as also it is on a deeper level but not a particular place in the large cosmos but a system of living shattered and corroded at the very core. In “Pricking Questions from the Grandson” (*Cataracts of Compassion*), he imagines his grandson questioning him in the following verses:

Unlike your humane parents  
 your generation proved inhuman  
 and mercilessly exploited  
 the bounties of this planet  
 and drank to the lees  
 not leaving anything  
 for our generation's survival

(Lines 35-41)

The sapling of life with its freshness, vigour and innocence does not blossom here anymore.

In “Wagamon” (*Write Son, Write*) we find the poet presenting the details of the place with acute sharpness with a shift in essential attitude. While in the Wagamon image had a cosmic implication, in the present on the main emphasis is on the indigenous scenario. The imagery is not only vivid and graphic but also kaleidoscopic. The images swarming in succession engage the attention of the reader till a complete image of Wagamon emerges before his eyes. For example,

Wagamon  
 Kerala's beautiful bonnet;  
 a spectrum of  
 spectacular scenes  
 carved all around it.

(Lines 1-5)

The poet appears to be more interested in wholes than in parts of working with a series of images, succeeds here in

creating an illusion of reality. The images do not vary widely from one another but represent a class by themselves. The poet's awareness of their interrelationship results ultimately in the composition of a complete scene, making explicit the pattern of life. Slums and skyscrapers are no longer detractors but the constituents of his total commitment to a different system of life. The poet handles the imagery with perfect felicity and ease. He succeeds in imparting a new meaning to it by constant reiteration right through his collections of poems. Indeed the imagery becomes integral to the total design of the poems exhibiting various facets of the poet's personality as an observer, voyager and one who realises through participation.

Dominic expresses his commitment to a distinct form and value in life. The poet establishes a unique kinship with the object of nature and grows rather Wordsworthian in his approach. "Lessons from Fruit Plants" (*Cataracts of Compassion*) is an evocative poem where the poet considers Nature as an essential element, a sort of inspiring agent.

Nature is the best teacher  
 Modest and humble man  
 learns eternal truths from it  
 Plants and trees exhilarated  
 when flowers are born

(Lines 1-5)

The world is a manifestation of the supreme deity and an exploration of myriad scenes will lead to an understanding of the essential truth. In "Nostalgia for Childhood" (*Cataracts of Compassion*) the poet as a mature being remembers the glory of childhood. This awareness of past in a present moment of time is transmitted through the images with equal intensity. It is evident that the poet has developed a liberal attitude towards Nature. In "No Balm Can Cure Nature's Wounds" (*Cataracts of*

*Compassion*) the images of Nature achieve their richest and fullest implication. The way the poet juxtaposes the two worlds of the defiled city and of the pure Nature is a marvel in itself. The two worlds of fanciful dreams and stark realities are set in opposition to each other. The images derived from the world of Nature are the archetypal life symbols. They project a pastoral vision of a fully refugent and harmonious life, a pattern in which men enters into sacred communion with his cosmos, including objects of Nature as a metaphoric condition of his integrated humanity of his desire to foster a community of beings. The images of the city one, the symbol of degeneration and dehumanisation – all those of Nature represent life of warmth. A few lines from the poem “Flower Vendor” (*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*) make the reader feel its spirit:

Rose, marigold, dahlia, daffodil,  
 jasmine, chrysanthemum, daisy, tulip  
 Dawn to night intoxicated by fragrance  
 Eyes bathed in alluring colours  
 Those pretty tempting flowers  
 Nature's bounties for human minds

(Lines 1-8)

K. V. Dominic reached the acme of Poetic achievements dealing with all the important subjects of theology, politics, human nature, God and universe, displaying his great zeal, vigor and power of fighting against human injustice. It is interesting to note here that in most of the poems of Dominic, the true virtue consists in his clarity of vision and the discovery of the world which is full of freedom and liberty, truth and beauty whereas the life of the poet is enveloped with the trials and tribulations, cares and anxieties. The Poem “Hut in the River” (*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*) shows him as a great champion of the causes of the poor and the downtrodden. According to him, the task of a poet is not only to create an

aesthetic form but also to arouse consciousness of the people against tyranny and injustice. He says:

A female family struggles so for survival  
nowhere else but in God's own country Kerala!

(Lines 13-14)

His love for man unconsciously and inevitably merged into love of God. He never accepted a conception of art divorced from life. He pursued beauty but a manifestation of life. Even he never thought of divinity as something apart from human life. He writes in "Om" (*Winged Reason*):

Om is our breath;  
a tonic to mind and body.  
It's a celestial music  
showering manna on the earth;  
It gives us peace and happiness;  
Om Shanthi, Om Shanthi, Om Shanthi

(Lines 18-21)

This spirit of optimism emerged from the natural phenomena also made the mark in his poetry. The poet expresses his faith in a bright future with a note of robust optimism in "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*) through the following lines:

Damages done to ecology  
can't be remedied singular  
Needs collective efforts of nations  
Let's hence abide by the eternal  
laws of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

(Lines 34-38)

Love, freedom, nature – these three constitute the main themes of Dominic's poetry. In the treatment of love he is spoken of as a Platonist. No poet felt more deeply the dynamic influence of love in moulding human destiny. None realised more utterly the insignificance of life devoid of love as a

transcendental force kindling all things into beauty. So far as freedom is concerned, his political poems are regarded as occasional items. Liberty for the downtrodden, hope for the oppressed, peace for the storm-tossed, these are things that stir his imagination to the depths. He regards liberty as freedom from external restraint. Love is the governing principle of his life and poetry, and is the basis of his philosophical thoughts. It is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man, but with everything which exists. It is the governing power and the cementing power in the universe. Love for him is not the name for one particular feeling, it is a complex phenomenon. It has many colours. His romantic poetry deals with the subject with the subject of love, beauty, Nature, human life and comes before us like a vision.

He had a deep and passionate love for the objects of Nature. The desolate rocks, caves, the fury of the storms, thunder, waves dancing fast and bright, the lightening of noon-tide ocean, the starry night, autumn evenings, the fresh earth in new leaves – all equally attract him. His treatment of Nature is dictated by his mood. “No Balm can Cure Nature’s Wounds” (*Cataracts of Compassion*) is another powerful poem of Dominic. Again it is his identification with the force of Nature that makes the poem a great work. The personification, the presentation of natural phenomenon makes the poem a great work of art. Since he believes in beauty, love’s beauty and delights in presenting beautiful objects of Nature, his art is consummate. But Dominic was not content with the sensuous appeal of Nature; the spirit mastered the flesh and he went beyond the external beauty of Nature and strove to realise the idea of beauty, of which she is visible embodiment. In “Maternal Attachment” (*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*) the poet feels the invisible presence of Universal Beauty. It is voiced in the following lines:

How shall I define Mother's love?  
No lexicon term can convey it  
Inexpressible, indefinable, unfathomable  
immaculate, eternal and divine is maternal love!

(Lines 36-39)

Dominic's desire was that the human world should be free from the dominant control of tyrants, oppressors and despots and people should breathe freely in a free atmosphere undaunted by the scowls and frowns of tyrannical rulers. He advocated the course of the toilers and workers in the fields and factories and demanded that they should not be exploited by landlords and capitalists. He wanted to usher in a more democratic social system in which equality, liberty and justice would reign freely. He planned a society based on liberty, love, brotherhood of mankind and the victory of the forces of good over evil. In brief, his idea of the further world was one of peace, plenty, prosperity and happiness for all human beings. Human sorrows, disappointment and suffering played an important role in the touching effect of his poetry. A note of regret and sorrow rings most pathetically and sublimely in many of his great lines, like the following from "Old Age" (*Winged Reason*):

Ageism is contemptible;  
unpardonable too,  
Today's torturer  
tomorrow's victim;  
We live with ironies

(Lines 34-38)

His poems are not only simply rich and profound in thought, but also highly integrated in artistic beauty and literary craftsmanship. He has fused both feeling and form together to make his poems immortal. He has written very elegant poems. There is an exquisite show of simplicity and harmonious music

in his poetry. His presentation is one of those rare emotions which can move the reader easily. His literary works are, without any doubt, a synthesis of great reforms, visions and ideals. Dominic's poetry is suffused with inspired moral optimism, which he hoped would affect his readers sensuously, spiritually and morally. Dominic has a unique appellation as the poet of Nature. He believes that beauties of Nature are divinely made for man to appreciate. He endows the simplest facts and phenomena of the world with glory and grandeur and thus revealed the most sublime truths in the simplest of language.

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**K. V. Dominic's *Winged Reason*:  
A Portrait of Social Realism**

**Dr. D. C. Chambial**

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Prof. K. V. Dominic, a versatile teacher, editor, poet and critic – all in one – is well-known in the field of Indian English literature as ex-editor of *Indian Journal of Post-Colonial Literatures* (IJPCL). He is now the Secretary of Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics (GIEWEC) and editor of its biannual refereed journal, *Writers Editors Critics* (WEC). He is also the editor and publisher of the refereed biannual *International Journal on Multicultural Literature* (IJML). Dominic has also emerged as a poet of social realism in the debut volume of his poems *Winged Reason* (2010). This paper aims to study his poems in the present volume for his social concern.

K. V. Dominic, like professor Shiv K. Kumar, is also a “late bloomer” in the world of Indian English poetry. In this very first volume of poems, he exhibits his penchant for social themes such as religious harmony, poverty, corruption, suffering, human cruelty, mafia crime, old age problem of aloofness, misappropriation of money, haves and have-nots, problems of the handicaps, female feticide, the evil of dowry, corruption, disparity, unemployment and neglect of intellect in India. In addition to these themes, the poet has also taken care

of dignity of labour, service unto humanity as service unto God, maternity, and beauty.

### **POEMS ABOUT HUMAN SUFFERING**

In 'A Nightmare' (22-23), the poet presents a comparison of the haves and have-nots. On the one hand, he pictures those who have things aplenty, and on the other, those, who don't have even the bare minimums of things that sustain life. The protagonist of the poem thinks himself to be "a hawk hovering in the sky." In his flight, he, first of all, sees "an obese boy / whose mother was beating him to eat more." Whereas in the nearby hut lived a famished child "crying for a crumb." Then the hawk moves to another sight of a "lavish wedding feast" full of "rich delicacies" being enjoyed "by the pompous guests." Outside "the town hall", he saw "two ragged girls ... / struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin" to find something to eat to keep their bodies and souls together. The poet juxtaposes affluence and dearth.

Thereafter, the hawk moves to a "public School" where the teacher has made a poor boy stand in the verandah in "the humid weather of forty degrees" for not wearing a tie. The hawk's wings take him to a spectacle where a large number of men, looking like ants, were standing outside a wine shop "run by government." What gave him the greatest surprise was that even the beggars stood there in that line for wine. The poet wants to show how the people squander their money on wine while poor women stand in a long line and wait for their turn for rations. This also shows men's wasting money on wine and women suffering for their concern for the family. The male folks' concern is limited to their enjoyment of themselves with wine, while women sacrifice their comforts for the sake of their homes and families.

He, then, describes another scene where the “public water tap” flows incessantly wasting the water and there are some taps that remain dry. The protagonist’s heart goes out for the poor people of the neighbourhood who wait and wait for water for hours in vain. In the next stanza, the poet gives pictorial description of rich people living in luxurious buildings in their old age and their wards gone to foreign lands; in the adjoining slum live three generations together in the same room. This poem is a picture of opulence and scarcity to focus the attention of the governments: state and centre that seem to have become blind to the needs of the needy.

‘Anand’s Lot’ (26-27) is about the child-pickers. They pick up young children and force them into begging. Anand is one such young boy. The poet begins by telling how jubilant and happy he was while living with his parents. Every day his mom loved him. He looked smart in his school uniform. One day, while going to school along with his other school-mates, suddenly, a car stops beside him, picks him up and whisks away to some unknown place. Now begins the saga of his suffering. When he tries to call for help, while being taken away, a man with whiskers gags his voice with a towel. Ultimately, he is taken to “a house and shut in a room.” He is given dry bread to eat and made to sleep on cold and hard floor. After some time, he is again taken in a car to a strange city and dressed in torn clothes. He is threatened to be killed if he dared defy their orders. Then the boy narrates his pitiful tale in these words:

I have to sleep in their hut,  
eat dry bread which I hate;  
always wear stinky rags.  
They scold me and beat me  
for not earning as they dreamed.(26)

These lines reveal the abject condition in which such children have to live. Though this may not be a real story, yet a simulation of the lives of a number of such other children lifted by these gangs and forced into begging. Their dream of a life full of modern amenities turns into a life of hell. Dry, cold bread and stinky clothes, what they hate, are thrust upon them. Such children, often, wonder about their parents, if they still remember them. A host of human atrocities are heaped on them: "Go to the shops and beg or I'll kill you." This becomes the fate of the apples of their parents' eye. Their dreams are shattered. They have no choice except begging and living a wretched life. The poet, in this poem, seeks enactment of government measures to stop such evil and unsocial activities and enforce law to bring to book such gangs.

'Gayatri's Solitude' is about the loneliness of a lady, who is already eighty years old. She has five children living in the United States of America. She, in her old age, lives in an "old-age home" as there is none to look after her in her palatial home that her children have built in the town. Her children live under an illusion that "their mother is cozy." This old lady suffers solitude despite all the things of this world at her call. She has lost appetite and sleep. Her pathetic condition finds expression in these lines:

Dawn to dusk,  
sitting in an armchair,  
looking at the far West,  
longing for her children's calls,  
she remains lonely.(31)

Her utmost misery, due to estrangement from her children and grand-children, is described in these lines: "The depth of maternal love, / and the pangs of separation / no child can gauge" (32).

Certainly, children are never aware of the agony of maternity until they themselves get singed in the same fire. This poem throw light on the suffering of the aged people living an estrange life.

The poem, 'Tsunami Camps', deals with the sufferings of people during Tsunami. They are made to live in camps, in shelters built of GI Sheets, in scorching heat. Despite the fact that people donate a large sum to provide relief during such natural calamities, a huge portion of it "is hoarded in the government exchequer, / or diverted for some other purposes." This is how the government misappropriates the money so received and plays with the sympathies of the people/donors. Life in camps is so miserable that they prefer death to life. They lament: "It is better to kill us than to torture like this." They get neither sufficient food, nor drinking water. The last couplet of the poem sums up the plight of the Tsunami sufferers: "Unending wails and unending sobs; / not even gods listen to their cries." They feel that neither the government, nor the God listens to their woeful cries. It is an unending tale of their suffering. In this poem, the poet satirises government's apathy for the sufferers and misappropriation of the money received for the purpose.

'Old Age' describes the woes of the old people: at this age body weakens and one becomes dependent on others even for one's personal needs before death. In one's old age, even one's dearest children "turn ungrateful. / They hate and curse / And never care." Old age is contemptible, but it is the truth of life and cannot be evaded. All those who live up to old age have to bear with its ignominies. This poem pleads care from children whom these old people have brought up by sacrificing their own comforts.

'Rahul's World' depicts the sorrows of a child who is turned out of the class by the teacher for not doing his homework. At home the atmosphere is not congenial: father is a drunkard; he often beats his mother and Rahul; super is thrown away; often they have to sleep without food. How can one study in such an atmosphere? For Rahul, the whole world seems full of cruelty: "Cruel father, / Cruel teacher, / Cruel world." While at this age he "longs for love", he never gets this precious thing, called love. There are a good many little children who are denied the balm of love to ameliorate their sorrows and wipe their tears. The poet shows his concern for such children.

'What a Birth' is the story of a lady who has just returned from her hard work in the hot sun from her fields. She pines for some rest from this heat in her house: "A thatched hut / cardboard walls / boltless door." Inside lies her, ailing and hungry, mother. Her daughter has also returned from school and is hungry. Whatever they had for lunch, in the pot, has been devoured by the stray dogs. In the evening or night her "Drunkard husband / will come ... / to resume beats and kicks" – the fate of a poor lady! The poet wonders at such a birth and the store of sufferings in her lot. By exposing the abject condition of the poor, the poet wants that government should help such poor people with the bare minimum of food, clothes, and shelter – *roti*, *kapda*, and *makaan*.

'Helen and Her World' is about a visually challenged girl. She is very brilliant, takes notes in her class very fast; she knows answers to each and every question. But what a tragedy that in her exam she cannot write her answers for want of the facility of Braille script. The poet deplores:

Had her scribe known  
spellings of all words,  
she could have won a rank  
in her degree examinations.(39)

The amanuensis, provided to her for writing her answers, was not as intelligent as she. He, while writing answers on her dictation, misspells some words that she knew well. For his deficient knowledge, she had to lose her rank in her examination:

She is the light of the class,  
light of the family,  
light of the village,  
but alas the light never sees itself

It is the greatest paradox of her life. In spite of her lights (intelligence), she is unable to see the world. She remains in perpetual darkness. The poet has used the word, “light”, as a pun, to denote her intelligence and eye-sight. ‘Vrinda’ narrates the tale of a physically handicapped girl of “twelve or thirteen” years old in a TV show. She has lost one leg but she is never sad. She dances to the tunes of Hindi film songs and entertains a large number of people. She has “turned her challenge / to strength and success. / A loud message to the world!” She is not deterred by her handicap but meets this challenge boldly and becomes a source of encouragement, and sets an example to those who feel disheartened at their physical handicaps. Both the poems teach the world a lesson: such handicaps can only be belittled with courage and will.

### **DIGNITY OF LABOUR**

‘Harvest Feast’ embraces the theme of cooperative farming, as practiced in communist countries. Kerala is also ruled by a communist government. The students are taken to the fields for harvesting crops. Such little hands that elsewhere run after butterflies and enjoy their childhood, have to work in farms and toil hard in sun and shade:

moved through the rough fields;  
ploughed the land; sowed the seeds;  
plucked the weed; reaped the corn;  
carried sheaves on their tender heads;  
threshed, husked, cooked.(35)

It is all taught to them by their teachers: education and vocation simultaneously. There is no shame in doing one's duty, instead it teaches "dignity of labour" that can "solve the food crisis" and save millions of lives around the world who die of hunger. After the crop is harvested, they cook the food with their own hands and enjoy the feast:

Those little pupils from Kozhikode,  
avidly feasting rice and payasam;  
The harvest banquet of their sweated labour.  
Nothing can be tastier than this.

It also brings to mind the lesson: the outcome of hard-work is always sweet. However, the young hands should not be taxed with such tiring tasks. Verily, lessons in practical learning and dignity of labour are good, but not labour. Care should be taken that such lessons in dignity of labour do not turn into exploitation.

### **ECONOMIC DISPARITY**

The poem, 'Haves and Have-nots', describes that these two categories are created by man and not God. For Him all are equal. The protagonist protests:

What right has the mortal man  
to divide and own this immortal planet?  
What justice is there for the minority  
to starve the majority?(37)

In the present democratic set up, it is the capitalism that rules. The dreams of "Have-nots" for "health and happiness"

are shattered. They do not find any hope from any quarter. They are borne in misery and die in misery.

### **ECOLOGY AND GIFTS OF NATURE**

The poem, entitled 'I am Just a Mango Tree', narrates the endless uses of a mango tree to humanity. While a mango tree gives everything: wood to burn, leaves for animals, juicy fruit for human beings to relish besides oxygen for all living beings to survive. But, what does it get in return only an axe. For man's vile acts of destruction, the mango tree asks God: "God, why is your man so selfish and cruel?" To this the God replies:

' ... I created him  
in My own Image  
but he's gone astray;  
My agony is endless.  
That's the fate  
of Father everywhere.  
I shouldn't have created this human species;  
But how can a father kill his sons?'(41)

Because of man's such destructive acts, God Himself feels hurt and ashamed for having created man. The poet warns man of ruthless ecological destruction through this poem and wants to create an awareness among the masses.

### **ABOUT WOMEN**

'International Women's Day' (42-43) narrates, despite the world celebrating Women's day, how women are discriminated all over the world. Women have been considered everywhere: "an instrument of lust / and hot-selling sex!" Even at parents' home: "Mum and dad love him; / she gets only reproaches", and "Seldom educated; / hence no employment, / and always dependent." She tries her best to do her best for the welfare of her family and home, but "Her love and sacrifices / remain

unrewarded.” The poet as a reformer holds up a mirror unto the society and demands a right place for her. He writes:

Venerable is woman,  
 for she is your mother;  
 she is your sister;  
 she is your wife;  
 she is your guide;  
 she is your teacher;  
 she is your nurse;  
 and above all,  
 she is your angel.(43)

How pitiable that she serves man in every phase and age of his life, yet she is considered inferior and is always marginalised in the society. A question arises: Is humanity possible without her? The answer is always in the negative. Why, then, this discrimination against woman? It is a question that still looks for an answer. Woman must get her equitable right to live as an honoured and respected individual in society.

### **POEM ABOUT WORKERS**

‘Lal Salaam to Labour’ celebrates the dignity of labour. It is “the backbone of country.” Without labour nothing is possible. It is needed in fields, factories, construction, almost everywhere. The labourers “nurse bubbles of dreams; / but reality pricks them oft, / and make heaven of tavern” (44-45). When they fail to get even enough food, they seek solace in wine. Perhaps that is the reason why majority of the workers can be seen drunken after their working hours. In order to show our respect unto them the poet writes:

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.(45)

The poet is verily realistic in his approach: we require labour only to do the things that we can't do. Then, why to disparage and hate them; they deserve our love, respect, and praise. It is the demand of humanity to be humane unto them. The title seems to display his penchant for humanitarianism.

### **SOCIAL EVILS**

'Laxmi's Plea' is about the menace of dowry. It tells the tale of a poor girl, named Laxmi, who became orphan at a very young age. She, somehow, educated herself and earns a little to feed herself and her bed-ridden mother. Her "meagre salary ... / hardly meets ... food and medicine" (47). But the society is so cruel that it never sympathises with any person. Laxmi has to bear with the pinching remarks of the society like "when is your wedding?" (46). The poet considers [with all thinking people of the society] dowry as a menace. Many a gem, among girls, lay down their lives at the altar of this demon, but the society remains blind and turns a deaf ear to the demand of ending this devil/menace from the face of society. Each and every girl must realise her dreams and has not to prick her "bubble of dreams" like Laxmi, the protagonist of this poem. Ultimately, for want of money and being unable to arrange for dowry, she decides to remain single. It is also a bold step on the part of Laxmi; for, if a boy can remain single, why can't a girl? Unless the girls are not bold enough, this menace cannot be wiped out.

### **POEMS ON ANIMALS AND BIRDS**

'A Sheep's Wail' (24-25) is a very significant poem that proves man as "the cruellest" and "the most ungrateful / of all God's creations." The poem is in the form of an apostrophe in which the sheep addresses man. The sheep tells man that he is vested with certain "special powers" that they [sheeps] don't possess.

Man is considered the most intelligent; so, he domesticated animals. Man deprives the sheep from its fur that God has given to their kind for his own benefit and comfort. Man not only takes the milk of animals for his use but also kills them for his food. The poem becomes satirical in that he has invented some “false philosophies” to prove that he/man is “His choicest” creation. The poet posits that all creatures are His children and creations. It seems most absurd to call man as his child. The heaven must be reserved for the animals which serve throughout their lives this “choicest” being, and not for the one who kills and exploits them: “If a heaven is there / we will reach their first / and pray god to shut you out.” He debunks man of all his morality to own a place in Heaven, if it exists.

‘Cuckoo Sings’ is based on the truth that the beings of nature, like a cuckoo, enjoy life in singing and loving without worrying about existential needs. On the other hand, man toils throughout his life and remains unsatisfied due his unending desires that make him more miserable. The more he gets, the more he yearns. The more he toils, the more he moans. The cuckoo calls its mate, in the song, for love: “Wake up mate, / let’s start love”. Its song, on the other hand, exhorts man, as his habit, for toil: “Wake up man and / sweat for your bread”. The poet affirms:

Yes, cuckoo lives  
singing and loving,

while man exists  
sweating and moaning.

This poem juxtaposes carefree nature to ever worried man. While those living in harmony with nature are always happy, those severed from it lead an ever troubled life. Will man ever learn to contain his desires and live a happy life?

'Sleepless Nights' is a comparative narration of the cuckoo's natural home and the carefree freedom it enjoys juxtaposed to human living in a concrete-cell and trying to get, unsuccessfully, the cold air in hot and humid night from the fan. See the comparison, apparent in the poet's narration:

The cuckoo lies on his God-given bed;  
the gentle breeze always caresses him;  
the nocturnal music lulls him throughout,  
and his sleep is sound  
free from cares and worries.

I lie in my concrete house,  
fighting against the man-made heat,  
and the dreary sound of the hot-wave fan.  
The late and heavy supper in stomach,  
and all such unnatural ways of life  
take away that God's own gift. (56)

While the cuckoo enjoys sound sleep in its natural environment, man is unable to sleep in his artificial environment created by him for his safety and comfort.

'My Teenage Hobby' tells about "angling" as the persona's pastime. Once he angled a fish and saw it struggling for freedom; his conscience pricked him and he "unhooked the fish". Since then "Reflections on life / became my [his] pastime" (48). This poem shows poet's concern for all living beings, and manifests his humanitarian attitude towards them.

## **ON POLITICS AND POLITICIANS**

'Indian Democracy' is a satirical poem on Indian political system and the vices that it nurses. The poet remarks that election in India is a "several billion business" in which "secularism is butchered." During elections, against the principles of democracy, politicians bank on cast, religion, regionalism and

parochialism. Nobody cares for “nationalism and patriotism.” The demon of communalism is nourished on the altar of democracy. He voices the prevalent vices of Indian democracy:

... democracy reigns  
 drinking tears of thousands!  
 Criminal MPs,  
 brought from jails  
 to prove majority on floor;  
 horse-trade of billions!

The governments that are elected are corrupt. People vote the same politicians “again and again”; for, they have “no other options.” In this manner Indian democracy, the largest in the world, continues to live and rule without caring for the people who elect them. Once these politicians are elected, they become the sovereign masters and lord over the poor people, who have voted them to power.

### RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

The poem ‘Om’ is also a satire on the Hindu Brahministic philosophy that considers one caste superior to the other. The poem begins with the notion that this is the sound that emanated with the creation of the cosmos and embodies the Hindu Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The poet writes that even chanting of “Om” was “Once the monopoly of the high caste; / low-caste people were denied / it’s (sic) listening and muttering;” (66). He writes that the low-caste people were, instead, forced to pronounce it as ‘On’. It is “the holiest mantra of mantras; key to all problems of the world”. It serves as “a tonic to mind and body.” It is the source of mundane “peace and happiness.” It should not be the privilege and prerogative only “of the high caste” but of all. When it, the sound or *Naada* of “Om”, was created with the creation of the cosmos, God did not reserve it for any one class or creed. He gave it to all human

beings for their well-being and mental peace in moments of crises and peace alike. Why, then, should men divide humanity for the recitation of this mantra or sound? One caste of people can recite it while others can't. It indirectly voices the protest and anger of the deprived castes and class against the one that mastered over them. God has created all equal. All extant social distinctions and disparities should be banished from society to end all caste based discriminations between man and man to evolve a healthy and harmonious society.

### **FESTIVALS AND SOCIAL HARMONY**

'Onam' is Keralites' favourite harvest festival. It continues for ten days with various celebrations: it comes after monsoon and people celebrate it by "feasting with new rice", with flower decorations, such as *pookalams* in front of every house. The atmosphere is rife with "Onam songs, / Onam plays and Onam dances." There are many competitions in "sports, games and arts" to forget their worries for these ten days. The poet also tells the legend that is behind the celebration of this festival. It celebrates the golden rule of a Kerala King, named Maveli. He was a very just king and equality prevailed in his kingdom. Vishnu could not brook this happiness in his kingdom and out of envy hurled him to the underworld, and "granted him a boon / to visit his people once a year" (54). It is believed that Maveli, the king, visits the people and land during Onam to find everyone happy. But, he returns at the end of Onam celebrations, as one very sad: "he returns in tears." Festivals are the backbone of Indian culture and social harmony and strengthen unity in diversity.

PCK Prem very pertinently comments: Dominic's social concerns are genuine and he is forthright in unequivocal condemnation of the rich. This is possible only for a person

who is committed to an ideology. ... he believes that words sublime and true, sincere and forthright cannot provide happiness to the downtrodden but definite and positive efforts are needed so that they get all the essential things of life necessary to live....” (110). IK Sharma, a prominent contemporary critic, writes: “In most of the poems the poet is in and around his state. Through portraits of known and not so well known characters he attempts to showcase his contemporary Kerala. Certainly, it is significant that he has not lost touch with his local roots” (156). It is suffice to label him as a regional poet.

Dominic's poetry projects him as a social realist and champion of the down-trodden concentrating particularly on his own state, and obliquely on humanity in general. As a new entrant in the field, he needs extra care with his creations to make his place authentic and permanent in the arena of Indian English poetry.

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**K. V. Dominic: The Poet Extraordinary –  
Emergence of the New Indian Poet cum  
Critic in English: An Assessment**

**Dr. S. Chelliah**

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Among the Indian English poets, observes Dr. A. K. Choudhary, “K. V. Dominic is one of the most vibrant Indian English poets whose intense passion for the burning social and national ailments makes him a disciple of Ezekielean School of poetry. His poetic passion for the natural beauty keeps him besides the Romanticists.” Like Mulk Raj Anand, Dominic is the “champion of the downtrodden” and as a true realist with immeasurable social feelings his heart is full of “milk of kindness and pathos.” His poetic output covers a wide panorama of themes, ranging from multiculturalism, injustice, environmental issues, caste-ism, poverty and corruption. His poetries reveal a blend of humanism, idealism and a keen perception of the contemporary social issues. He shot into limelight with his anthology of poems *Winged Reason*; *Write Son, Write*; *Multicultural Symphony* and *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*. The poet asserts in the preface to *Winged Reason*: “I give priority to the content of a poem than to its style. That is why my poems lack much imagery and other figures of speech...Poetry should be digestible as short stories and novels...I adopt a

conversational style in poetry, which again attracts the ordinary readers" (*Winged Reason* 12).

With all its dynamics, K. V. Dominic has portrayed the living conditions of the poor and in his poems readers can hear a moving voice of the downtrodden people who were deprived of their rights to live. He throws light on the social degradation and splitting of class, religious sects and society. The poet is conscious of the rampant rueful corruption in society whether it is political or religious.

But power corrupted;  
 leaders turned tyrant;  
 philosophy failed.  
 Equality to man utopian.

Capitalism rules the day;  
 Have-nots numbers swell.

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

“In Memoriam George Josen” written in the form of an elegy to lament the accidental death of his colleague is indeed the manifesto of poet's humanism. This work can be considered as a conscious work of art of Dominic. The poet is strongly admired by the ideology of E. K. Nayanar, the thrice Chief Minister of Kerala, who turned the dream into thoughts and thoughts into action. E. K. Nayanar has become a source of unending inspiration to the people of Kerala because he always moved forward with full dedication and devotion to the work he enjoined upon. The poet pays homage to this indomitable leader through his poem “Long Live E. K. Nayanar”. He writes:

You are our polestar  
 who saves us from Darkness.

(*Winged Reason* 20)

His poem “Child Labour” shows how Dominic is a radical critic of this age. He appeals to the conscience of the readers to stop the evil practice of child labour. It is a cruel inhuman practice and a complex issue that stunts the physical and mental development of a child. The exploitative nature of child labour is emphasised through this poem. The poet says:

Poor lass helpless and crying  
None in the world  
to share her sorrows  
.....  
When children of her age  
strolled gaily to their schools  
tears ran like brooks

(“Child Labour”, *Multicultural Symphony* 36)

In the poem “International Women’s Day”, he penned hypocritical tendency of male society and this poem is enveloped in gloom and despondency. This poetry can be seen as a critique of the oppressive and hegemonic patriarchal structures of power and it presents a powerful image of a tyrannical patriarchy which uses women as an object of pleasure. He caricatures the sad plight of woman in this poem. He laments:

All echoes of years of yore!  
Problems remain the same!  
Woman is the game!  
Birth to death,  
an instrument of lust  
and hot-selling sex!

(*Winged Reason* 42)

Dominic’s uniqueness lies in the fact that he is an Indian English poet who has given the most impressive and the most emotionally satisfying account of man’s relation to Nature. His devotion and love towards Nature is noticeable in many of his

poems. Evaluating his treatment of Nature, he can be said as the ardent worshipper of Nature as well as the poet of humanity.

Plants and animals never divide  
the earth among themselves;  
What right has the moral man  
to divide and own this immortal planet?

(*Winged Reason* 36-37)

Like John Keats and Edmund Spenser, Dominic is a passionate lover of beauty in all its forms and manifestations. His poetries are the incarnation of beauty and at the same time it is the expression of religious and social philosophy. He has deep insight to see beauty in everything. Dominic wrote of beauty and Nature with all Wordsworth's insight and truth and Keats's magic of words.

The poet dreams of a day in which human beings live with harmony as members of a family irrespective of race, class, gender and language. In his third collection *Multicultural Symphony* he writes, "Poetry is the best and easiest medium of imparting messages and values to the people. In this busy cyber-age, which is fast deteriorating in eternal human values, poetry has a great role in moulding cultured and civilised society..." (7). The beauty of the world lies in the diversity and here in the poem "Multicultural Harmony" the poet praises the beauty of diversity:

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

(*Multicultural Symphony* 15)

In his poetry collection *Write Son, Write* he espouses care and concern for environment, thus advocating a more

thoughtful and ecologically sensitive relationship of human beings to Nature. God had created a big garden with different kinds of trees, flowers, plants, paddy fields, all blooming together existing side by side harmoniously, enjoying the melodious music of birds, animals and crackling of the leaves. In the name of development humans are exploiting the Nature. Friedrich Nietzsche had once remarked, “The world is beautiful, but has a disease called man.” People have destroyed the ecology and have ravaged flora or fauna, soil, mountains, forests, natural resources and water. The poet accurately explicits man’s brutality towards animals and Nature. Effects of improper waste disposal and waste management of humans is questioned by the poet. The poet expresses his anguishes:

Snakes appear on  
roads and lanes:  
their havens are furnaces

Mice and rats multiply  
and trouble human beings:  
man litters food around

(*Write Son, Write 73*)

Increasing population, growing industrialisation and urbanisation have pushed up the demand of water and now the world has entered an era of scarcity. “Water, Water, Everywhere...” (*Write son, Write 91-92*) is a poetic look at the harsh realities of society which suffers because of the scarcity of water. “How I Became a Vegetarian” (*Winged Reason 76*), “Connubial Bliss” (*Winged Reason 29*) “A Spider in My Bathroom” (*Multicultural Symphony 52*), “I am just a Mango Tree” (*Winged Reason 40-41*), “In the Name of God” (*Winged Reason 69-70*), “Nature’s Bounties” (*Winged Reason 49-50*), “Hunger’s Call” (*Write Son, Write 66*), “Mukesh’s Destiny” (*Multicultural Symphony 60*) are some of his poems which provoke readers to

think deeper and deeper about the Nature, world, future and humanity. The poet K. V. Dominic has broadened his poetic canvas by delving deep into the contemporary issues of the modern era and gave voice to them without any hesitation but with originality and authenticity.

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***Write My Son, Write:***  
**An Aesthetic and Spiritual Reflection of**  
**World by K V Dominic**

**Dr. Laxmi R. Chaugan**

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“Thought can be lofty without being elegant, but to the extent it lacks elegance it will have less effect on others. Force without finesse is mere mass.”

Fernando Pessoa

“Do you know what is truly magnificent? One tear, which is falling down from an authentic sensitive person’s eye. Down the cheek and adorns the floor.”

Alexander Zalan, *Pavilion of Thoughts*

K V Dominic in his *Preface* to his collection of poems *Write Son, Write* has said that people today are crazy after materialism, and divinity in them is being lost to such an extent that they give no importance to principles, values, family and social relations, cohabitation with human being and other beings. Instead they are trying their maximum to exploit their fellow beings, other beings and the planet itself. If it goes on like this, total destruction is not far away. There is aesthetic and spiritual reflection in what he has written in his longest and masterpiece poem “Write, My Son, Write” which is the opening poem of his second collection of poems *Write Son, Write*. Seeing the beauty

in the creation of God and measuring everything as bigger than oneself is itself an acceptance that God is present everywhere and in everything. The biggest difference lies here – one who could see the difference and acknowledge it and the other who doesn't even observe it. The recognition of life is the basic but the curiosity with which the question for life comes is not small. This in fact is the reflection of spirituality that we see amongst very few of our time, K V Dominic being one of those.

In the words of Dominic, the poem “Write, My Son, Write” is indeed the manifesto of his views and philosophy. The evils and glitches that exist on Earth at present is one of the many aspects of spiritualism. One's consciousness elevates and gains height of spirituality when we start thinking about the prevalent problem. Jealousy, greed for insignificant things, egocentrism, uncontrolled anger and lust, vengeance and degrading self are the results of deteriorating spiritual realisation.

The natural calamities and disasters that occur on the face of Earth today is the result of the untamed human greed which has passed on to the next generation unimpeded. Drought, earthquakes, famine and other natural disasters cannot merely be regarded as environmental misbalance. It's a way of the Nature to make us realise that we have abused our natural environment badly enough and we should know our length of a line. Dominic in his longest poem with 21 sections published in his second collection of poems titled *Write Son, Write* looks at the environment and Nature in a very subtle way conveying to us that every thought we think about has an effect on everything around us.

Dominic begins his poem with the line ‘My Son, I have a mission.’ Though the poem as stated by Dominic is the

manifesto of his philosophy he brings in a divine touch in his poetry. There is a purpose of God behind the creation of this Earth and all of us in our personal greed and chase for a better life have forgotten the divinity which is present in each and every thing created by God. In the first part of the poem God seems to be in direct conversation with the poet and asks him to fulfill his mission through his creation. The creativity which is in the hand of the poet is his artistic quality of presenting the purpose of God in his beautiful words which he could use to make the people of this world understand the Almighty's message. God needs a medium of communication and believes that the tip of the poet's pen would become a source of his message. So he tells the poet not to get confused about what he needs to write as now God himself will speak through the tip of poet's pen. Though it will be in the hands of the poet but the words thus communicated to mankind will be of God. A special trust is reflected by God in the poet's caliber and his creativity in writing. Thus He bestows a great responsibility on the shoulders of the poet. God's mission is not short; it is very long with great responsibility which He believes could be shouldered by the poet alone. So God says to the poet, 'Write till I say stop.' Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya puts in his words '... the poet is the chosen seed of God' (7). It is a beautiful example of thawing of God-the Almighty spirit into the human soul and elevating it further through karmic manipulation and spiritual energy realisation. These realisations come to us only when we have an inclination towards spirituality and we start to pray and wish for a better world.

In hullabaloo of our day to day life we have lost the capability to listen to the symphony of the Nature around us. The noise of our materialistic achievements has made us deaf. Today we don't have ears to listen to the melodies created by the

small birds living in our surrounding. We are least bothered about their slow disappearance from our lives with which we had grown up. The coming generation is deprived of this melody as we have lost the tracks of our symphony with the Nature. We no more hear the buzz of the bee!! In Part 2 and 3 of the poem the poet reminds us of our lost senses and tries to tell us how we are wrapping ourselves in our cocoon that is taking us away from the Nature. Plants and animals dance to the number of God. Nature plays the music in very mild tune that we fail to listen to but animals and plants enjoy this symphony because they are living as one with Nature. We the human beings in our pursuit to substantiate ourselves a better race have ceased to conjoin with the Nature and have torn our souls away from the Nature and its beauty. We don't have the ears to listen to the sound created by the light, to listen to the chirping of the birds, to dance to the pitter-patter of rain, to tap to the steps of moving grass and the branches of tree, to the singing of the insect from morning till night. In our fiasco to listen to these descants of Nature we have forgotten the presence of God. Today with his materialistic creation man is contending with God and trying to establish himself on the same pedestal as of God.

He defies me,  
 assumes my position,  
 haughtily claims  
 as the noblest  
 of my creations!  
 He gives me shape,  
 and boasts,  
 embodiment of God!

(“Write My Son, Write” 28)

But we seem to have overlooked one thing that we can on no occasion recreate the Nature or establish it back and we have

shattered ‘the perpetual harmony’. As said by Mahboobeh Khaleghi, “The poet talks of perpetual harmony which is vital for the existence of the universe and everything in it. The poem has a lot many visual and auditory images to exemplify this symphony in Nature. These visual images from immediate surroundings compel us to see deeper into what we see every day, but miss the meaning and its message’ (91).

The poet not merely talks about the human ignorance in heeding to the tunes surrounding him but also his negligence towards his own body. There is a synch in everything we do. God has created the human being with divine perfection but we hardly ever pay attention to our body. There is no sense of respect for it. We need to cherish and revere these wonderful temples that we live in. We need send a positive message to our body through our brain every time we see our own reflection. But we have made it a dumping ground with our erratic lifestyle in chase of progress and development which is leading us nowhere.

Ralph Waldo Emerson speaks about the inability of man in seeing the Nature from the innocent eyes of a child and it is because he has lost the divine perception which God had given him.

But he, the man-child glorious,  
Where tarries he the while?  
The rainbow shines his harbinger,  
The sunset gleams his smile. (n.pag.)

Dominic too has drawn a parallel to these lines in his poem where God infers the human selfishness:

Your selfish mind  
tries to ignore  
benefits rendered  
by these housemates.

(‘Write My Son, Write’ 26)

Dominic in Part 6, 7 and 8 of his poem says that to experience wonder in the presence of Nature, we need to reach out to it with an equilibrium between our inner and our outer senses. All facets of Nature are parallel to some state of mind. Nature offers uninterrupted youth and neutralises whatever misfortune ensues an individual. A man with vision may lose himself in the laps of Nature, may become a receptive through his divine perception through which he transmits oneself into his consciousness and makes him sense his coherence with Divinity. In Nature, which is very much a part of God, man finds potentials similar to his own. There is a special relationship, a symphony between man and Nature. But Nature by itself does not provide the pleasure that comes of distinguishing this relationship. Such contentment is a result of a particular harmony between man's inner processes and the outer world. The way we react to Nature depends upon our state of mind in approaching for it. The coherence according to the poet is being slain by man, for God always had a reason in creation of mankind along with other species. Man's hunger for power could never be satisfied. In his pursuit to prove his prowess he has slain these creatures which always had tried to communicate the divinity about its existence alongside the human race. 'Vainglorious' man thinks he is the master of wisdom but he seldom is aware of his obliviousness and unintelligibility. This part of Dominic's poem reminds me very much of the T S Eliot's lines Part III, "*The Fire Sermon*" in *The Wasteland*:

Et O cesvoixd'enfants, chantantdans la coupole!

Twit twittwit  
 Jug jugjugjugjug  
 So rudely forc'd.  
 Tereu (n.pag)

Dominic's concern in human regression is parallel to Eliot's in *The Wasteland*. *Every word spoken loses its significance as the mankind appears to be unsubstantiated without any subtlety. In "Write My Son, Write" the degradation of human morals is regretted by God himself. God considers human as his most cherished creation that has evolved to its present state after millions of years of 'progressive march.' But now God seems to be in doubt whether this decision of his was 'wise or folly.' God had bestowed man with highest intellect granting him the knowledge and wisdom which he thought man would apply in understanding his fellow being and other creature. But instead man in his prudency is today assuming and claiming the position the God. God imbued in man 'celestial values: happiness, beauty, peace, love, mercy' but he has forgotten it all and is spreading hatred and violence.*

Human is so lost in his world of pleasure that he overlooks the pain and suffering that is laid on the innocent birds and animals in the name of celebration. It is an irony that we sing hymn in the praise of God for his mercy and love feasting over the flesh of innocent creature simultaneously. This act has made human the meanest of all creatures and has disappointed God. God has created all creatures through similar love with which he has created human being. We have botched the expectation of God of being an epitome of love, kindness, gratitude and patience but the lesson of coexistence in harmony has elapsed from human nature. Now God wants us to learn it again from the Nature, animals and birds. We should understand that our behaviour towards animals is considered barbarous by God. There can never be a perfect civilisation until man realises that the rights of every living creature are as sacred and sanctified as his own. But we fail to perceive the resounding cries of the dying animals which are killed to content our pleasure which is ever widening. All of us can save the divine creatures of God by simply being better people, especially through our service. Being

good in materialistic sense is not enough; attaining the higher selves by enhancing our spiritual energy should be our purpose. We need to rekindle the divine spark that is inside us to make us what we truly are. There are countless ways in which we can help others if we genuinely want to do so.

Service to the poor;  
 Service to the needy;  
 Service to the tortured;  
 Service to animals  
 and plants and trees  
 are service to me

(“Write My Son, Write” 34)

We are so much absorbed in our depraved and immoral action that we consider the natural symphony of God in thunder as his punishment. It is indeed our conscience which is still alive and is trying to give us realisation of our evil feat for which we could be punished in due time. But God says it is not Him who is punishing man in any way it's his own fear owing to which He winces. The ‘celestial father never hates’ because the divinity has the heart only to love no matter how malicious man has become. Man has shut his ears, closed his heart on the symphony of Nature that is being sung by Nature day in and day out. With his shut eyes he is never able to appreciate the abundance Nature has bestowed him with. Man is living in ignorance not able to see the light that God has showered on him. He is blinded by scintillating light of his own materialistic achievement that today he boasts of knowing God and teaching the ism in the name of God. Dr. Mukhopadhyaya puts in his thought in this regard and says, ‘History knows that debauchery begins wherever kings are surrounded by immoral intellectuals. They add roseate hues and mellifluous taste to the most selfish agenda of the political mafias, and win over the masses so that they become prey to the cupidity of the political mafia by their

own choice. In other words, God the Father opines that if the politicians and the religious men and the intellectuals were separate from one another, there would be freedom in society, and the exploitation of the masses would not take place' (44-45). In today's prospect it can be said that no God is better than a false God. It is the false God who exploited religion, because when falsity amalgamate with truth then it does much damage and people think it is done by real God. The real religion cannot be oppressed and the true religion is humanity.

Man's self, ego and pride have gone so high that he has forgotten the humility and humbleness of God. He preaches religions which are mere manifestation of his fantasy about God and pretends He is omniscient. Human depiction of God is replication of his own thought. He makes offering to God as he himself is desirous, builds huge religious buildings because he is appeased by it, not God. The world today is ruled today by mafias, be it religious, political or intellectual. They have blinded the lay men in their faith. In the name of administration people are enslaved in their own country. The killing and plunder knows no boundary, for their personal greed they have exploited the Nature of its resources. Major manipulation of religion is done by politicians. Politicians use it as vote bank without ever musing on the evil aspect of it. They use the religious sentiments of these blinded people to persuade them to do anything whether right or wrong. God says it's our incapacity to think and see beyond that has made us myopic in humanitarian sense. Our attitudes since ages have been that of believing and not of investigating or searching. We have to change this attitude and start questioning so that real religion could be born inside us.

The poet says religious and intellectual mafias are twin side of the same coin. Today both have become business and the so-

called preacher becoming the biggest shareholders. This has led to degrading religious value.

Intellectual mafia  
 assumes omniscience;  
 exploits innocent people;  
 detracts them  
 from their Creator;  
 makes them pessimists;  
 imposes their  
 obsolete philosophies.

(‘Write My Son, Write’ 37)

Dominic in his poem exemplifies humanist views providing solution to the sociological problems of the world around him as he lives through it. The poet says, ‘Karma is the best prayer’ (‘Write My Son, Write’ 34). He describes the turbulence through which mankind is passing concurrently searching for God but has failed to perceive his incidence and manifestation in the form of innumerable creation of God in which God says he is present. God has shown numerous ways in which he could find him but the search of man doesn’t seem true to his word as he seeks Him in manmade buildings. God does not entail any such construction to be made for him. His presence echoes from meekest to the mightiest creation; it cannot be seen but sensed and professed by man. And this actually is the degradation that Eliot also talks of in his poem *The Wasteland*. We have lost our ability as human beings; the materialist advancement has robbed us of all the feeling and emotion that has left us covetous, selfish and egotistical. Dominic’s poetry highlights his spiritual voyage’s stages from Part 1 to part 21. He has addressed the complex fundamental issues of life and humanity with his very simple style which itself is the reflection of poet’s humility. He ends his poetry with utilitarian approach. God is still cynical about the susceptibility of human and shows his apprehension

in human understanding but feels that if they could do what he has tried to communicate through the pen of poet then the mankind and his other beings would be saved 'if they heed'.

Enough, my son,  
enough;  
nothing more  
to tell your species.  
If they heed  
they will be saved;  
other beings  
will be saved;  
plants will be saved  
and the universe  
as such will be saved.

(“Write My Son, Write” 37)

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## Multi-dimensional Vignette in the Poetry of K. V. Dominic

Dr. Manas Bakshi

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What is sensitive poetry? It is such emotional vivacity that touches one's heart and leaves a lasting impression. Dominic's poetry is powerful to the extent that it moves one if he/she is cogitative about the day to day happenings in this madding world of stark reality. And as the poet delineates on multi-dimensional textures exposing his concern for Nature, Humanism, Ecology and events with an impact, Dominic's poetry ultimately compels one to discern "truth in beauty."

It is because of Dominic's profundity of knowledge and enriched experience that even some stray and prosaic matters or seemingly not-so-significant incidents come alive in his poetic outpourings. Here are a few instances from his first book of poems *Winged Reason*:

Many months have passed  
since I left my mummy, dad and Smitha?  
Are they still crying at my loss?  
Tears streamed down from Anand's cheeks.  
"Bloody dog, why are you standing still?"  
The bearded-man slapped helpless Anand.  
"Go to the shops and beg or I'll kill you."  
Crying, Anand stretched his hand  
went begging shop after shop.

(*Winged Reason* 27)

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

*(Winged Reason 37)*

All echoes of years of yore.  
Problems remain the same!  
Woman is the game!  
Birth to death,  
an instrument of lust  
and hot-selling sex.

*(Winged Reason 42)*

It goes without saying that Dominic explores strange facets of life with a subtle bearing on humankind. It can be marked that his maiden venture *Winged Reason* not only provides a poetic glimpse of some vital social issues but also mirrors some of the real-life sequences in a fascinating way – like a ‘hawk hovering in the sky’ vis-à-vis ‘two ragged girls outside / struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin’ (*Winged Reason 22*). Here, the trait is overt but the gesture is covert as in another poem dwelling on city versus village life:

How innocent and malice-free  
is village life  
where all live  
in harmony and love.  
They are gullible –  
so fooled and cheated  
and looted by the townsmen.

*(Winged Reason 72)*

Reviewing the book, Patricia Prime opines “Dominic blends the complex tradition of English verse into something wholly his own, and the poems do so in a variety of forms and via different arguments, all of which amount to Dominic’s interest in social themes” (269). This is so because, though a

baptized Christian, Dominic believes in the concept of jeevatma (individual soul) and Paramatma (universal soul). And his bold confession, in this respect, is “all living beings are part of Paramatama or God”, and “the Creator has given man permission to use plants just for his survival” (*Winged Reason* 14). He not only avows that animals, plants have the same right to survive as the human beings but also advocates the Advaita philosophy which signifies the close and eternal propinquity between Nature, God and His creation. And it has to be like that since the preachings of Adi Sankara who consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta immensely cast an impact on the mindset of Dominic.

Be it the tenet of the Christianity, the Hinduism or the Buddhism, be it the influence of the veteran British, American or the Indo-English poets, Dominic has the guts to “take poetry and short story as a weapon and reaction to the evils of the society.” For, he believes in the social philosophy of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ which means “the whole of humanity is made of one life energy.” In his article, Dominic expounds: “It is because of the selfish petty mind of human beings that they consider themselves as separate entities having no connection to other beings and objects of this world” (Dominic “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” 45).

In the title poem of hi second book *Write Son, Write* he affirms:

Write, my son,  
write.  
Living beings and  
lifeless objects  
all inter-related.

(*Write Son, Write* 25)

Again, as if God asks:

Who gave you right  
to kill my creations?  
The way you torture  
fowl and cattle,  
bereft food and water,  
caged and chained,  
gasp in sunlight;  
you cut their throat  
live to their eyes.

*(Write Son, Write 29)*

The tonal empathy vibrant in this poem is also manifest in several other poems in the book like “Resolution,” “Hunger’s Call” and “Teresa’s Tears”; but on the question of human values that are fast fizzling out from our familiar ambient, on the issue of feelings for each other not in human society but also all in this planet, Dominic strikes the right chord for introspection by all of us, for the benefit of our future generation too in the following lines:

When will “crow-crow” be  
pleasing as “koo-koo”?  
When will the Black be  
kindred to the White?  
When will the Black and the White  
dwell in the same house  
and dine from the same plate?  
When will we behold God’s creation  
with impartial eyes  
and find His beauty in all forms?

*(Write Son, Write 58)*

Dominic’s thought-provoking poems on ecology once again propel the view that human beings are destroying Nature for their own satisfaction, if not greed, carrying not at all for other species – not even for his own future? So much so that God seems to have been rendered helpless for not being able to

save his creation, from the disaster caused by the nincompoop  
'selfish to the core':

Who told you to emit  
toxic gas and defile  
the sky, pure and clear?  
Your wells are dry,  
Rivers are dry;  
I am not responsible.  
You have dug your grave,  
And what am I to do?

*(Write Son, Write 64)*

Dehydration caused wrinkles;  
smooth skin turned  
sore and scaly;  
lovely long haired women  
appeared shaved-headed ghosts.

*(Write Son, Write 91)*

The coexistence of human beings, animals and plants is what is prescribed by the law of Nature or the Creator. Any move to go against His will is bound to boomerang. Deforestation, wanton pollution and depletion of water bodies have added to the spate of global warming. In effect, "scarcity of water will lead to anxiety, depression, displeasure, aggression and aversion. The climate change will bring out the danger by restricting our access to the basic needs of our life" (Sebastian 149). The threat to environment and our immediate responsibility to ward it off have been emphasized in many a poem of Dominic to prove how Nature and mankind are, from the beginning, interlinked.

On the socio-political issues too, Dominic's poetry dominates with the articulation:

No difference at all  
between religious  
and intellectual mafias;

twin sides  
of the same coin.

(*Write Son, Write* 37)

And there is no doubt that several socio-political maladies haunting our society at present tend to tarnish the image of Indian Democracy:

Thus democracy reigns  
drinking tears of thousands!  
Criminal MPs,  
brought from jails  
to prove majority on floor;  
horse-trade of billions!  
Corrupt governments,  
draining the blood of people.

(*Winged Reason* 60)

Matha, I know the cause of your tears:  
Religious, political, intellectual mafias  
tear thy heart and drink your blood.

(*Write Son, Write* 43)

In his review article, Dr. D. C. Chambial writes, “The poet’s concern for the country as one being weakened by its own people is also manifest. The Indian virtue of harmony in diversity seems at stake at the face of some shenanigans and multi-faceted mafias jeopardize not only her unity but also her very nature” (179). The anguish and sufferings of urban life also find a place in Dominic’s poetry as much as the thoughts on justice, peace and harmony more prominently in his latest book *Multicultural Symphony*.

While in a poem like “Lal Sallam to Labour” the poet urges for

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

(*Winged Reason* 45)

Dominic is vocal about the menacingly growing terrorism in "Train Blast":

Krishna,  
why are you  
so indifferent?  
Can't you punish  
these terrorists  
as you punished  
Asuras?

*(Write Son, Write 86)*

But interestingly in *Multicultural Symphony* the poet focuses at the very outset on:

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

*(Multicultural Symphony 15)*

And, with equal conviction, he lashes out at issues like "Child labour" (35), "On Conservation" (31), "Bulbul's Nest" (38) and "Valueless Education" (56). There is no question of expressing sympathy or crying hoarse over the oppression on child, need for conservation, swallowing of chicks in Bulbul's nest and valueless education, but here Dominic questions as a poet quite aware of his socio-political responsibility – why this inequality and injustice are allowed to do fine in such a paralysed system as ours where

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

*(Multicultural Symphony 49)*

True, poets alone cannot bring about a radical change or socio-economic reforms; but they can use their pen to stir up others' consciousness, to make others think over what mankind is heading for. Poets themselves can also raise their voice if, as Dominic thinks, literary world can be moved by their creation – their forte.

And a poet like Dominic does so – even going to the extent to cavil at his own helpless condition for being a poet who, in his words, has to surrender to the structure of super ego:

“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.”

(*Multicultural Symphony* 64)

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**Multicultural Ideologies in the  
Select Poems of K. V. Dominic:  
A Rendition of Poetic Insight**

**Parthajit Ghosh**

---

*Nana Bhasha, Nana mot, Nana Paridhan  
Bibidher Majhe Dekho Milan Mabaan*

[Many languages, many creeds, many costumes,  
Let there be unity in this diversity]

Shri Atul Prasad Sen

Postmodern literary discussion in the context of multiculturalism, reflecting the techno-modern human society characterised by its ethno-cultural heterogeneity, tends to be therapeutic for the malignancies of the century and fosters human values in tolerance, uniformity, compassion, mutual respectfulness and much more with an urge for an egalitarian 'global village', 'a multicultural paradise'. Although, from the Pluralists' point of view, "in modernity, culture is hybrid and interactive" (Kerr 382), the studies of multiculturalism strengthen the notion of unity in diversity of distinctively existing cultures and subcultures and demand for the equality and 'recognition' on behalf of the minority, dalits or 'subaltern' groups, immigrants, and the marginalised to essentially establish a true republican society. Cultural identity is "partly shaped by

recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others” (Taylor 25). However, “misrecognition shows not just a lack of due respect. It can inflict a grievous wound, saddling its victims with a crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need” (Taylor 26). Cultural equality and its recognition undoubtedly reinforce individual freedom and one’s own identity as culture is necessarily customised by the individual; it is a matter of human dignity. And precisely, this human world is profoundly split into different nationality, ethnicity, race, class and gender; and, multicultural literature seeks to comprehend this diversity of culture.

To its widest philosophical sagaciousness, multiculturalism is the multiple manifestations of a single form. The whole universe is one family [*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (वसुधैवकुटुम्बकम्)] as scripted in the *Maha Upanishad* (Chapter 6, Verse 72):

अयं बन्धुरयं नेतिगणनालघुचेतसाम्।

उदारचरितानां तुवसुधैवकुटुम्बकम्॥

[*ayam bandhurayam neti ganana laghubetasam*  
*udaracharitanam tu vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*]

[*Only the small minded discriminate saying:*

*One is a relative; the other is a stranger.*

*For those who live magnanimously*

*the entire world constitutes but a family.]*

(Nanuk)

Even the whole physical world configures with the perfect matrix of the same five elements, *Panchatatva* [*ksbithi* (earth), *ap* (water), *tej* (energy), *marut* (air), *byom* (sky/ ether)] dappled into all and dissolves back to the same. This esoteric metaphysics seems to be pantheistic that believes in the omnipresence of

God, the Creator (the Same), 'from atom to the heavens' – as to be alluded:

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्

[*Isa vasyamidam sarvam yat kinca jagatyam jagat.*]

[Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by God.]

(*Sri Isopanishad*, Verse 1)

Cultural deviations or differences are actually man's response to these multiple manifestations as they impinge upon his material life that often spawns up such pseudo religious attitude imbuing with avarice and superiority complex among the certain dominating forces in a society that evokes into racism, casteism, apartheidism, colour segregation, gender discrimination and many other malpractices abominable to the glory of human advancement. Multicultural literature idealises for a cultural symbiosis in a peaceful single land.

K. V. Dominic, one of the most contemporary Indian English poets of considerable merit, is very keen to his observation and is very impressionistic, real and utmost truthful to his poem through which he exhibits his utmost disappointment to his society where the multicultural value is deviously neglected or violated by such malign forces contravene the mandate of equality and manumission. Dominic lives in such a society where man glorifies the triumph over space and many a scientific invention, but still, man has to suffer being the victim of terrorism, injustice, inequality, inhumanity, casteism, religious hooliganism, hypocrisy and much more man-made malices. Conferring cause and causality in art of composition, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, one of the veteran Indian English poets and critics, comments in his disquisition, *K.V. Dominic – Criticism and Commentary: Essential*

*Readings Companion* (2017): “K V Dominic could not write these poems if there were no social injustice” (3). Dominic’s poems are the critique of human follies wherein he philosophizes about the multicultural harmony among all the livings and non-livings in the universe; as he muses in ‘Write, My Son, Write’ (Part Three):

There is rhythm  
and harmony  
in every molecule;  
every atom;  
every movement.

(*Write Son, Write* 22)

In his another masterpiece poem, ‘Multicultural Harmony’, Dominic urges his fellow beings to learn the need of multicultural existence in the entire universe, ‘a grand concert’, ‘composed by the Solespirit’; where inanimate beings know how to flow with the system, ‘Plants and animals never divide the earth among themselves but ‘the mortal man’ who, by using his narrow intelligence, establishes discrimination among all into this ‘perfect symphony’:

We do use our reasoning power  
not to find harmony  
We take thrill in discordant notes  
Love to split atoms  
and destroy others.

(*Multicultural Symphony* 16)

Dominic himself is a true multiculturalist, an ideologist, a baptized Christian yet believer in Hinduism and Buddhism, a monotheist (a believer in *Advaitavada*). Although his notion of multiculturalism is nothing new but he reminds his fellow being by mirroring the reality. He believes in the laws of *Vasudhainva Kutumbakam* as eternal ones, *Karma*, *Tyag*, *Abimsa*, *jeevatma* and *paramatma* (individual soul and universal soul) and much more of

Hindu ideologies and consciously infuses them into his poetry to instill the Indian values to his own countrymen and to propagate these noble values to the rest of the world. He makes it very clear to the preface of his first volume of poetry, *Winged Reason*, saying: "Though a baptized Christian, I am primarily an Indian, and it is my duty as a teacher and poet to instill Indian values to my students and countrymen, and also propagate these noble values to the rest of the world" (14). All he tries to set up the real cultural identity of India into the threshold of multicultural universe.

India is a country of multiple languages, festivals, music, dances, cultures, creeds and colours, undoubtedly a beautiful land of diversity, a country of largest democracy on the planet, but gradually being decayed into the wasteland where; as Dominic observes:

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

(‘Indian Democracy’, *Winged Reason* 60)

Even the poet's own land of Kerala, a state of beautiful climate and landscape called ‘God's own country’ is on his great apprehension that its literate people are just ignorant of the multicultural values and are crazily driven by the pseudo religion and politics, so the poet laments in his poem, ‘Multicultural Kerala’:

Alas! high rate of literacy  
 doesn't yield fruit to my fellowmen.  
 They are puppets in the hands of  
 religious and political mafias.  
 Become preys to superstitions,

offshoots of religious blind faith  
Millions are spent for  
senseless rituals and ceremonies.

*(Multicultural symphony, 29)*

Culture always appears with the expression of religious feeling. Through religion one may get to know one's profoundest intuition regarding one's origin, mission on earth, and adopts customs and rituals; while, pseudo religion misleads and makes one blind. Dominic censures this religious blindness; by the spell of which, 'religious mafia' divides God into thousands and hence the humanity into the shed load of castes, communities and nations; therefore, "that religions give no solace and hope / to the miserable multitudes" ('Haves and Have-nots,' *Winged Reason* 37).

And this pseudo religious belief indulges the superiority complex to those stakeholders of the society who never hesitate to kill their own fellow beings and destroy resources. So, the poet is in wonder to ask his fellow beings at the Part Six of the poem, 'Multicultural Harmony':

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.

*(Multicultural Symphony 22)*

Terrorism in the name of God, the most hilarious occurrence in the world, is the byproduct of the religious blindness that attracts the youths and fascinates them by the heinous idea of self-sacrifices done to God. Therefore, the poet wishes:

I wish I were a bullet  
and shoot into the chest of that terrorist

who compels that teenage boy  
to explode and kill that innocent mob.

(‘A Blissful Voyage’, *Winged Reason* 21)

Creator, creation and creature – ‘simple enough to learn the relation’ - are the truth behind whole existence where mankind is never imagined to be divided into categories of haves and have-nots. It’s the trick of capitalism of today that the minority of haves rules over the majorities of the have-nots in this world:

When millions die of hunger,  
thousands compete for delicacies.  
Minority always luxuriates  
at the cost of  
majorities’ necessities.

(‘Haves and Have-nots’, *Winged Reason* 36)

Women in Dominic’s society are treated inferior to men and marginalised in the reign of patriarchy while in reality men and women are one, two sides of the same flow. But, from her birth to death she is dominated by men and exiled into the domestic walls. “Her birth is ill omen / Millions are butchered / before they are born” and she is treated as burden to her parents, her husband, her brothers and to her son. She is not free to her will and is forced to take care of the social customs imposed upon her for being women. She is as if a child producing machine, a sex doll and men are as if licensed to exploit her. The 21<sup>st</sup> century patriarchal society is not still prepared to accept the female intellects. Condemning this act of gender discrimination as an impediment to the multicultural harmony Dominic asks his fellow beings at the Part Three of his long poem, ‘Multicultural Harmony’:

Man, woman is your counterpart  
Why can’t she be taken  
as your own body?

Why is she viewed  
as a consumer product?

*(Multicultural Symphony 19-20)*

The whole ecosphere is originated within this single universe immersed in diversity. Dominic evinces how human interventions mess up the natural flow of lives of other creatures who become the scapegoats of human lust. So, he pleads for the prosecution against any injustice with any creature in this planet. He strongly appeals for the eco-sovereignty for the fair treatment to all the species regardless all types of man-made discrepancies as Nature is always impartial to all and all seems equal to nature. It is man who for his own greed and luxury oxidizes the atmosphere and spoils many a biotic and abiotic elements on the Earth. So, in the poem, 'God is Helpless', Dominic satirizes that God becomes helpless and accuses man for his stupidity:

The sun is the same;  
its heat is the same.  
Who told you to emit  
toxic gas and defile  
the sky, pure and clear?  
Your wells are dry,  
Rivers are dry;  
I am not responsible.  
You have dug your grave,  
And what am I to do?

*(Write Son, Write 64)*

Among all the discriminations and deviations Dominic becomes hopeful and sings the glory of God in communal harmony when he reads in *The Malayala Manorama* that a Hindu widow homeless old woman of seventy-five, Chellamma Antharjanam, rejected by relatives, neighbours and society is rescued from death by a Muslim woman, Resiya Beevi, who

takes care of her as her own mother and rehabilitates her and spends all the expenditure of the old lady – a true service to Allah (God), indeed. And so, Dominic exclaims in the poem, 'For the Glory of God':

Resiya spends for the food  
which Chellamma cooks and eats.  
Ten long years have passed  
Since heaven thus exhibits here.  
An exquisite model of  
communal harmony!

*(Write Son, Write 62)*

Again, with his utmost optimism and hopefulness, Dominic addresses his fellow beings at the concluding part of 'Multicultural Harmony' to make a single multicultural world regardless all the deviances, an ultimate solution for cultural disharmony. So, he pleads:

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)*

Although, Dominic shows his disappointment to the misdemeanor of man but he does not lose his faith in mankind. To him, human world is like a rose flower and 'each petal adds to its beauty'. It is man's narrow mindedness that makes him live within his set boundary and loses the opportunity of living the 'magnanimous'. Division is in human mind and Dominic tries to enlighten into it by rendering the philosophical truth of multiculturalism as one of the contemporary Hindi lyricist, Munna Dhiman, glorifies multicultural values into this song:

*sab janme ek beej se  
sab ki mitti ek*

*man mein duvidha pad gayi  
ho gaye roop anek*

[all are born from the same seed,  
all are from the same earth,  
there was a doubt in the heart  
and there became many forms.]

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**K. V. Dominic:  
A Poet of Sparks and Flames**

**Dr. Alexander Raju**

---

I knew Dr K V Dominic for a decade or so as the editor of a biannual research journal named *Indian Journal of Postcolonial Literatures* and his sudden metamorphosis into that of a poet surprised me at first. He began to write poems at the age of forty eight and he himself confesses in his Preface to his collection of poems titled *Winged Reason* that he did not know why the poetic Muse eluded him all the previous years. Though he was a late comer to the poetic arena, those who love the poetry of the age and follow it currently cannot miss the spirit and sincerity of his poems.

It was the social and political milieu of India, and the world at large that made Dominic a poet. The poetic Muse pleased on him a bit late that he could start composing poems only in his forties or fifties. But then the Helicon flooded so violently that poems came one after another from his assiduous pen. Dominic found poetry as a suitable medium for expressing his ‘overflowing powerful feelings’.

As Pronab Kumar Majumdar points out in his Foreword to Dominic’s *Winged Reason*, the poet’s ‘sensitiveness and compassion are abundantly manifested in his poems. His sense

of justice and kindness towards fellow human beings are evidently present in many of his poems. Dr Dominic's poems are reflections of his disturbed conscience and as Jayanta Mahapatra said, 'a poet is first of all responsible to his or her own conscience' ("Piercing the Rocks: Silence to Poetry").

At certain occasions, he is too frank in affiliating himself with certain political systems, but that is too only in a philosophical tone. It is true that in such helpless situations, one may clutch at the available straw and so it is excusable. Dominic's poems are not mere "Songs of Innocence", rather they are "Songs of Experience". Every sight and every sound, every feeling and every thought, stirs his conscience that he could not help but giving spontaneous vent to his responses through poems. If he is incensed by unpleasant happenings around him, one cannot blame his temperament but his sincere desire to create a better world.

Dominic's poetic heart is confused as he watches the atrocities and cruelties around him done in the name of God. Terrorism, communalism and corruption at high places are spreading like wild fire that gormandize every aspect of social life. We could stand only as helpless witnesses, wishing like the poet to "plead all prophets / to inspire and instil humanism / in million's communal minds" ("A Blissful Voyage"). There was a time when we all expected that religions represented God but today we wonder like the poet, "How pitiable / that religions give no solace and hope / to the miserable multitudes" ("Haves and Have-nots").

The poet's concern over ecology is also evident in many of his poems. He is an environmentalist who is worried about the future of mankind. He condemns the recklessness of man in cutting down trees and polluting the environment. The

personified Mango Tree in 'I am just a Mango Tree' gives an authentic vent to the emotions of the poet. The tree asks:

Don't I do them good as to all?  
Don't I have feelings and pains,  
though I endure in silence?  
Haven't I the right to live?

This earth is the rightful residence for all 'flora and fauna'; perhaps man is only a later intruder, arrogantly claiming dominance over everything and, thereby, misbalancing this earth's equilibrium.

Dominic's poems are fruits of his moral indignation and, at times, they seem pretty aggressive to a certain extent. If they are bitter, the mistake is not with the poet but with the circumstances in which he lives. We love his poems because they are reflections of our quotidian experience. They all have a great didactic message which no sensible person could ignore. I wish him all success in his poetic venture.

## K.V. Dominic as a Humane Poet

Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ

---

K. V. Dominic is born and brought up in a traditional Christian family. Many of his poems do reflect Jesus' values and Gospel messages. The qualities of the Kingdom of God, preached by Jesus, are expressed in many of Dominic's poems. Dr Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya writes in the FOREWORD to the 6<sup>th</sup> collection of Dominic's poems entitled *Cataracts of Compassion*, "He has not composed hymns in praise of God or in praise of love. He has not ventured in hymnal rapture or triumphal chant" (7).

In this article we shall look at Dominic's poems both from humanistic and Christian perspectives. Besides, I believe that what is genuinely humanist is very much Christian and vice versa. As a prolific writer Dominic has published six anthologies of poems. They are 1) *Winged Reason*, 2) *Write Son, Write*, 3) *Multicultural Symphony*, 4) *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*, 5) *K V Dominic: Essential Readings and Study Guide* and 6) *Cataracts of Compassion*.

As Dominic has said, he started late at the age of 48 years to write poems. But his poems reveal that his past life was a sort of preparation for his writing poems and for his writing career. Jesus had about 30 years of his hidden life behind him when he started his public ministry as an itinerant preacher. Similarly I believe that Dominic as a student of English literature and later

as a learned professor and scholar has spent much time in studying, reflecting, observing and reasoning about his own experiences and about the life around him. So we see that his values of life around him and his poetical sensitivities were formed over long years of his past life as well as the current happenings.

Jesus began his public mission telling the people, his fellow Jews, that “The Kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1: 15). Revealing his Mission Jesus quoted from the book of Prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has chosen me to bring  
good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovery of the sight to the blind'  
to set free the oppressed  
and announce that the time has come  
when the Lord will save his people

(Luke 4: 18-19).

We know that Jesus first lived as the son of a carpenter and then as a carpenter in Nazareth village. Then he started his three-year long public life telling people that God is our Father and that he loves and cares for all his children. His life and message of good news were expressed in both in words and in concrete actions.

Jesus gave the sum and substance of his life and message in two commandments: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: “Love your neighbour as you love yourself.” (Mathew 22: 37-39).

Evangelist Mathew has summarised Jesus' life and mission saying, "Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom, and healing people who had all kinds of disease and sicknesses" (Mathew 4: 23). Jesus' life and message cover anything and everything on earth. Similarly going through the anthologies of Dominic we see that Dominic's poems cover a wide variety of topics and subjects. His poetic sensibilities embrace both the animate and inanimate world. But his poems mostly revolve around human beings and their concerns.

In the PREFACE of his first collection of poems *Winged Reason*, Dominic has acknowledged that, "The major theme of my poetry is the eternal relationship between Man, Nature and God. In the same PREFACE he further says that his views of life are shaped by "Christ, Vivekananda, Marx, Darwin, Shree Narayana, Said, Fanon, Gandhi, Nehru, Mother Teresa, Baba Amte, Salim Ali, Steve Irwin". We know that most of these eminent personalities are greatly influenced by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And as the French would say, Christ has been a Humanist par excellence.

As Christian and humanistic poet, Dominic says that he feels responsible to his own conscience as well as to all human and non-human beings. This is clearly seen in all the six anthologies of Dominic. For instance, his love for fellow human beings is revealed in the first two obituary poems entitled 'In Memoriam: George Josen' and 'Long Live E. K. Nayanar'.

The two poems respectively proclaim the poets' love and admiration for his neighbour Josen and for the thrice (Communist) Chief Minister of Kerala, E. K. Nayanar. In the first obituary Dominic feels terribly at the death of his friend and yet with Christian faith bows to the inevitability of death:

Your absence, everywhere is haunting  
we find it hard  
to console and reconcile  
with the inevitable!  
We are all  
Bound by His will  
to be here  
or to be away.

In a similar vein the poet expresses his love and appreciation for the dearest CM, Nayanar:

You were a true Communist;  
a comrade to the core of your being,  
a rare species,  
compassion and love  
an epitome of Socialism.  
Yet did give due respect and valued  
those even who differed with you.

Dominic is deadly against terrorism and war as they are against love and concern. When President Bush sent USA army to Iraq, thousands died in the war in that country. The poet's imagination and sense of justice soar high in the poem 'A Blissful Voyage' in *Winged Reason*:

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.

Dominic has many poems expressing his Christian faith and Jesus' Kingdom values of love and service, justice and equality, compassion and kindness. The poem entitled 'For the Glory of God' in his anthology *Write Son, Write* is a beautiful example of love and service. The poem is based on the true story of two women: An old abandoned woman Chellamma Antharjanam and a Muslim woman Resiya Beevi with her husband and four kids. Resiya sees the old woman on a railway

track waiting for a few minutes to end her life under a speeding train. At the nick of time Resiya drags the elderly woman and takes her home. Chellamma being a vegetarian Brahmin Resiya takes her to an old age home and cares for her there. Then, respecting the old woman's wish to die in her own land, Resiya buys a small plot of land and builds a hut for Chellamma and provides provisions for her regularly. Let me quote from the poem:

Resiya spends for the food  
which Chellamma cooks and eats.  
Ten long years have passed  
since heaven thus exhibits here  
an exquisite model of  
communal harmony.

Here we can recognise in the Muslim woman Resiya the personification of genuine Christian (and humanistic) values of love and service. May her tribe increase!

The poem 'Sister Mercy' in the same Anthology *Write Son, Write* is a beautiful example of living kingdom, values of justice and equality. Dominic portrays the life of Dayabai alias Sr. Mercy dedicated to the values of equality and justice.

Devoted life for the tribal;  
a lone fighter for their rights;  
fought against slavery;  
fought against girls' trade.  
Hunted by the police;  
torture in barracks;  
took LLB for self pleading;  
.....  
Dayabai shows by life  
that path of Karma is  
nobler than other paths;  
serving God in human form  
is more rewarding than  
serving Him in the abstract terms.

While fighting for justice and equality in the homes and in the society Dayabai's own devoted life as a social activist is a lived example of compassion and kindness. I am happy to see that Dayabai's service to humanity has been acknowledged and appreciated. So the poet says:

Awards and honours  
embraced her.

A characteristic virtue of Jesus is his compassion for the poor and the suffering people. This virtue of compassion is present and is eloquently expressed in many poems by Dominic. His compassion and kindness is not limited to fellow human beings; but his compassion embraces both the animate and inanimate world of the entire creation.

Dominic's compassion and kindness finds poetical expression not only about the poor and the suffering people in India but also it goes beyond India to wherever there are injustice, hunger, famine and calamities of war. For instance, the poem 'Hunger's Call' in *Write Son, Write* portrays the poet's compassion for the suffering and famished people of Zimbabwe:

A startling news with  
photos from Zimbabwe.  
Carcass of a wild elephant  
consumed in ninety minutes!  
Not by countless vultures  
but by avid, famished  
men and women and children.  
Even the Skelton was axed  
to support sinking life with soup.

Dominic's compassionate heart grieves even thinking of the future calamities. While the President, Defense Minister,

High Officials and other VIPs proudly watch the demonstrations and rejoice in the 'Fire Power' of the Indian Air Force with great admiration at Pokhran, the poet looks ahead and foresees the tragic consequences:

But for me a horrible sight.  
The dropping of each missile,  
an explosion in my heart.  
My mind can't conciliate  
though only a parade.  
These aircrafts have been built,  
these missiles have been made  
not for just a display.  
One day or the other  
my sisters and brothers  
in Pakistan and China  
will be burnt with missiles.

(‘IAF Vayu Sakti 2010,’ *Write Son, Write*)

We can also see the Dominic's compassion and sympathetic sensibilities expressed at the end of the same poem praying for the rulers for love and concern for the famished dying millions of poor people:

God, kindle love  
in the minds of all rulers.  
Had they spent those billions  
to feed millions' hungry mouths,  
could save several millions  
dying famish year after year.

(‘IAF Vayu Sakti 2010,’ *Write Son, Write*)

The Christian vision of life embraces anything and everything in the universe because the Christians believe that God created everything in love. Many people do not understand it. So they, like a frog in a well, say, for instance, that the Pope who is the Spiritual head of the Catholic Church should limit himself to religious matters and not speak about 'worldly'

matters. But Pope Francis' words and deeds go much beyond the Christian and religious matters. The whole world welcomes his messages in life and words!

Often Pope Francis' leadership and messages are specifically addressed to all the people of good will. Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter "Laudato Si" on caring for our mother earth is a telling example. All people of good will have welcomed it as a comprehensive and timely document on environmental problems facing the earth. The boundaries of religions, races and cultures have not come on the way of people studying and appreciating "Laudato Si" as a landmark document concerning all people.

We can see this Christian world vision in all the six anthologies of K. V. Dominic. There are no topics or subjects which are 'untouchable' or foreign to Dominic. As a rationalist Christian he has not refrained even from criticizing fellow Christians and Church authorities. He is fearless in expressing his personal views, which others may not agree with him. In the PREFACE of his first anthology *Winged Reason* he says, "As a poet, I am responsible to my own conscience and I want to convey an emotion or a message often through social criticism."

Let me conclude this essay with final two quotes from Dominic. The first quote from his poem 'A Blissful Voyage' in *Winged Reason* expresses Dominic's advocacy of humanism:

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

The second quotation from his poem 'Lal Salaam to Labour' is also taken from *Winged Reason*. The poem speaks

about the Christian virtue of justice in remunerating fair wages to labourers:

Let us not be unjust  
when 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.

K. V. Dominic's verses like these prove what Voltaire said: "One merit of poetry few persons will deny; it says more and in few words".

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**Poetic Ruminations on Life: A Study of  
K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion***

**Dr. Pamela Jeyaraju**

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Professor K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion: A Collection of Poems* is a compilation of several of his poems. The poet's meanderings into the various aspects of life, the multifarious experiences that inspire change in a very sensitive being, which usually transforms itself into poetic expression, are obvious in the verses. In fact, in the poem "My Teenage Hobby," published in another collection *Winged Reason* (2010), the poet seems to make a confession to his readers about the source of his poetry. His "Reflections on life / became my pastime" (*Winged Reason* 48) is a clear demonstration that his poetry unfolds his deliberations on life. He also admits that "Poetry is the best and easiest medium of imparting messages and values to the people" in his Preface to yet another collection of poems *Multicultural Symphony* of 2014 (7). The poet is not just an expert master of words who is adept at constructing word magic; he is a social critic, reformer, and at times a political activist too. Normal men and women with their imperfections, as well as extraordinary men who have altered history through their philosophies and exemplary lives find place in his writings.

The poems in this collection treat varied subjects, at times tangentially different subjects. This actually lends colour to the

compilation. At the same time this shows the ability or rather the mastery of the poet in handling such ideas. As Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya states in his foreword to *Cataracts*, the poet is an anarchist more than a communist (7). For, he hails the deserving and at the same time does not spare the wrong doer. His satire is scathing in several instances.

*Cataracts of Compassion* begins with the poem “Enlighten Us Lord Buddha” where the poet wholeheartedly invites the philosopher to enlighten all “minds groping in darkness.” Buddha is noteworthy to the poet not because he is a king turned ascetic, but on account of having undergone “a renunciation of world / unique in history” (*Cataracts* 17). The poem finds a fitting place in the beginning as it speaks of the “divinity of human beings” which is almost the main point of focus in many of the poems. Yet another factor that finds expression in most of the poems is the irony of human existence, the binary opposition in everything. He draws attention to the able children and disabled parents, the affluent and the pathetic, the servant and the master, the clergy and the laity, the rich and the poor, the developed countries and the underdeveloped countries, all the while stating that they cannot exist in the absence of the other. His plea to the great Buddha is to enlighten all and “fill the planet with peace and happiness” (23).

The poet reveres a philosopher as well as an activist in the same way. His tribute to Mahasweta Devi allows him to decorate her with titles like ‘the compassionate sister, the crusader of the downtrodden and the role model to all writers’ (24). With an affectionate address to his ‘Didi’ the poet passionately believes that her message “will germinate and spread all over the world and / bower aching minds from terrible burning issues” (25).

If the poet can address complex issues with the help of a philosopher like Buddha and a social activist like Mahasweta Devi, he deals in more complicated ones like the transcendental nature of time and human inability to overcome it with illustrations from the circus artist Rani. As she performs each of her abilities, she ironically is filled with thoughts of how she will not be able to do them with time. This irony is actually the truth with which human nature is not satisfied, which is "Age can't be controlled" (30).

Not just human misery but also animal misery and the sorrow of all living beings move the poet. The poems "Bapootty's Onam Feast to Stray Animals" and "Dogs' Curse on Human Beings" are scathing attacks on the inhumanness of man towards dogs. The poet's stance is that the term 'stray animals' is actually a "manmade issue." Misinformed and ignorant of what action to be taken, the innocent animals are killed by individuals or civic authorities. Living in harmony with each other and sharing the sustaining wealth of this world is the right thing to do. Despite the presence of conscientious people like the taxi driver Bapootty, the world needs more such people to do the right thing. In similar lines does one find the self-explanatory "Musings on the Killing of a Tiger," where the poet condemns the killing of a tiger.

"From Lamb to Wolf" reveals the dark world of terrorism into which eligible and young people are drawn in the name of religion. The poem encourages awareness into a contemporary issue of fanaticism, ignorance and narrow mindedness in religion. The educated young man who unfortunately joins a terrorist outfit is killed on warfront. The question the poet poses is this: "How can God, epitome of love, be pleased / by violence and bloodshed in His name?" (37). Inspiring others to

think, this is an extremely pertinent question that remains to be answered.

Debopriya in “Housemaid’s Dreams” and the young widow in “I am an Indian Young Widow” chart the dreams of two young women. While both are young, one has the whole life in front of her to dream and the other has just her children for dreaming. What is common between them is the fact that they are bound by the generous embrace of poverty. Nevertheless they seem determined to move on. The pull of life, the passage of time and the unmistakable grit that is inherent in human beings to live provide the strength to challenge all odds and continue to be fighters.

Not just the society and living creatures, but mother earth too is held in great reverence by the poet. His integrity towards her seems to have moved him to write the poem “I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth”. The poem takes note of the blood-curdling shrieks and groans of mother earth as she is stripped of all her resources. The death cry of all those living creatures brings a curse from Mother Earth. “No Balm can Cure Nature’s Wounds” is once again a forewarning to all those who loot the resources of Nature without any qualms and the resultant climate changes which will topple the global balance. The poet takes it as a warning to all predators that live a parasite’s life on earth’s gifts.

The irrational discriminations rife within the Indian society on the basis of caste take a brutal blow in the poet’s hands under the title “Irrational Discriminations.” The hypocrisy among the population is a dishonor to the entire nation. The poet’s final verdict after an angry outpouring sums up his opinion: “Kindly learn basics of your universe / variety and multicultural unity / beauty of your sustaining universe” (43).

The poet does not spare the nation too. "Equality in India" is a scorching satire on how unequal the country is and what a farce the watch words of democracy – Liberty, Equality, Fraternity – have become.

Another noteworthy individual who has been hailed by the poet is Medha Patkar in his "Medha Patkar and Narmada Bachavo Andolan". He applauds her for her selfless contribution to the "economic, political rights of tribals, dalits, farmers, labourers and women" (48) and highlights the fact that she is available "where peoples' fundamental rights are violated and governments deny citizens' basic needs" (49).

The poet does not fail to pay tribute to those voices of the society, the journalists in his "Murder of Freedom of Expression". The growing trend of freedom of expression being a threat to writers and journalists has made the poet fearless in raising his voice against imbalance and hypocrisy. The poem highlights the heartless murders of Gauri Lankesh, Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi and likeminded activists who "were silenced for speaking against superstition and communalism" (50). In questioning the duty of writers and journalists, the freedom levels in democracy and the duty of the governments in protecting the lives of such people, the social activist in him is heard loud and clear.

The threat to the universe does not just mean the adults. Poets points out that the danger is evident in the lives of young children itself. It manifests itself in lost childhoods, less companionship and camaraderie among the family and inclement climatic and ecological conditions. In "Nostalgia for Childhood", "Pricking Questions from the Grandson," and "Silence! Silence!! Grave Silence!!!" the poet gives expression to

his fears and is unhappy about the evolution of human beings via technology.

The collection is relevant in the present day society. The remarkable fact that it provides answers to burning questions of today adds to its significance. The poet is contemporary in his thoughts and delivery. The language in all its simplicity touches the reader and evokes emotions that are the need of the hour. The subject matter being present day India and the challenges it faces, the poems question the ambiguities and try to find solutions too. The poet has been able to inspire the reader with his poetic spirit and the tenacity of a poet.

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## **BOOK REVIEWS**



**Review of Ramesh Chandra  
Mukhopadhyaya's *K. V. Dominic –  
Criticism and Commentary:  
Essential Readings Companion***

**Anisha Ghosh (Paul)**

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If for once a book could be judged by its cover, then the cover of *K. V. Dominic – Criticism and Commentary: Essential Readings Companion* by Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya could be seen as a visual statement of the content of Dominic's poetry as well as the thrust of Mukhopadhyaya's critical readings. Apart from the metonymic use of the poet's name "K. V. Dominic" standing out separately from the rest of the title to represent the entire body of his works, the smiling face of an innocent child on the cover page strikes the reader. Those familiar with Dominic's poetry know exactly what this smiling face of a little child stands for – it stands for humanity, charity, peace, kindness, love, equality, hope in a better future and a reflection of the superior being in all forms of life. In short, everything that Dominic's poetic creed stands for. Mukhopadhyaya's critical temper is quite in unison with Dominic's creative impulses as he makes as much philosophical reading of the poems as the poems themselves are.

The Foreword written by Dr. T. V. Reddy, veteran poet, academician and GIEWEC President, is an ode to his friendship with these two literary minds and their fruitful communion as critic and author in this volume. The book is divided into six chapters touching upon Dominic's life and mind, his development into a poet, thematic drift of his poems, Dominic's social criticism and finally, the critic's commentary on his selected poems. In the first Chapter of the book entitled "About the Poet and his Background" Mukhopadhyaya calls Dominic's poems representative of contemporary India, as his poetry comes out of life and his surroundings. Mukhopadhyaya writes "Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life. If this be true, then Dominic has no peer in the context of Indian literature" (Mukhopadhyaya 1). In seven sub chapters which complete the first chapter Mukhopadhyaya attempts to locate the poet, the context of his poetry thus charting the cartography of his poetic world. The search for who Dominic the man and the poet is, whether the two are one or different, and if different do they form the parts of the same whole, begins with the exploration of his origins and his originator through a study of "An Elegy on my Ma". Eventually we are led on to know more about the poet, the man and his world through Mukhopadhyaya's study of Dominic's hometown Thodupuzha, his home State Kerala and his country India. Thus, from home symbolised by 'Ma' to the world symbolised by one's town, State and country shows how the poet's growth reflects the growth of his poetic world which shaped the poet's mind and vice versa. A scholar in Sanskrit and Upanishadic learning, Mukhopadhyaya explains the three *gunas* – *sattva*, *raja* and *tama* – through five states of human mind each dominated by one or more of the *gunas* and explains how all three must exist together even if one may become dominant over the other at a certain point of time. Commenting on the use of *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika* in

relation to karma in Dominic's poems he writes: "Dominic has dwelled on these three gunas in relation to karma with wonderful precision seldom found in textbooks of Indian philosophy. Whatever activity is not *tamasika* and *rajasika* is *sattvika*. Well writing poetry is also a karma. It is often a social act by a lonely man" (Mukhopadhyaya 9). For Mukhopadhyaya Dominic's poetry is *sattvika* in essence for its altruism.

Readers/researchers familiar with Dominic's works know that he is a late bloomer in the garden of Indian English Poetry, who started composing close to his fifties. The second chapter of the book investigates what led Dominic's philosophical mind and his social reformist zeal to be channelised into the medium of versification. Moved to composition through an experience of personal grief at the loss of his friend, drowned with the car while he was driving back home in bad weather, Dominic is compared by Mukhopadhyaya to Valmiki who too was moved by grief at the killing of the male bird busy in love play by a hunter. How grief and loss triggered his poetic journey is illustrated through a list of poems beginning with the elegies to his friend George Josen, his mother, his cats no less loved than human children, to the loss of such public figures as E. K. Nayanar, or such events as the Siachen tragedy. The trajectory of grief thus treated in these poems also reflects how personal can be transformed into impersonal and the political when Mukhopadhyaya draws our attention to the poet's sensitivity to social injustice, inequality and plight of the elderly. The chapter ends with a study of Dominic's use of symbols and images.

Chapter three on the pathos in Dominic's poems is an extension of the second chapter, only here pathos comes in the form of empathy and awareness of grief felt, if not personally experienced by the poet, at the plight of the teeming millions. Mukhopadhyaya studies Dominic's sympathy towards the

downtrodden, the marginalised, the dependent in his poems written about child trafficking, or those like “Mahi’s Fourth Birthday” inspired by true events like the helpless child falling into the uncovered bore-well or the plight of a dalit child facing multiple marginalisations in society. The poet’s social responsibility and his compassion for humbler forms of life are discussed through poems like “Crow, the Black Beauty” and “Write My Son, Write”, the latter poem criticising man’s selfishness and greed which is destroying Nature. Man is mocked at as ignorant as little does he know that the destruction of the natural world is his own doom as he too is part of Nature.

In Chapter four Mukhopadhyaya draws our attention to Dominic’s criticism of government policies and measures which never materialised for the benefit of people. Beginning from the importance of the family unit which is the microcosm of Indian society as is reflected in poems like “Laxmi’s Plea” and “Rahul’s World” to the macrocosm of Indian society at large suffering from poverty and hunger, Mukhopadhyaya highlights the realism in Dominic’s poetry. In the last subchapter the writer shows how Dominic’s critique of the false claims of development lambasts the myth of ‘India Shining’.

In all the above mentioned chapters the studies made by the writer are in the vein of several earlier studies made by innumerable critics and scholars of sorts on Dominic’s poems. However, Chapter five opens up a novel way of looking at Dominic’s poetry through surrealism. Mukhopadhyaya sees the grotesque drama unfolding in Dominic’s poems like “Hunger’s Call”, recalling the image of a dead elephant chopped off to pieces to satisfy the hungry people at Zimbabwe, or the mutilated body of Professor TJ a victim of communal violence in Kerala as contributing to the surrealist aspect of Dominic’s

poetry. He writes “The image of TJ maimed and mutilated reminds us of the aesthetics of cruelty as propounded by Antonin Artaud. That benumbs our conscious mind and reason so that truth could be thrust into our being like a naked dagger” (Mukhopadhyaya 60). The chapter concludes with thematic analyses of the poems that show Dominic’s concern over the destruction caused by terrorism and war and man’s exploitation and depletion of natural resources. The last chapter of the book is a thematic commentary on selected poems of Dominic like “Siachen Tragedy”, “Massacre of Cats”, “Lines Composed from Thodupuzha River’s Bridge”, “Parental Duty” and “Long Live E. K. Nayanar”. The selection of poems by Mukhopadhyaya highlights the wide range of themes covered by the poet ranging from concerns private to public, local to global.

Though much of what has been said and written by Mukhopadhyaya has already been probed into by critics and scholars before him, there always remains something new to be discovered in Dominic’s poetry and through Mukhopadhyaya’s work Dominic’s realistic, simplistic, artless poetic endeavour earns the name of ‘docupoetry’ (documentary-like poetry). Mukhopadhyaya’s erudite philosophical observations, often marred by half-jocular statements like “Of course we do not have his voter ID, Pan Card, Adhaar card etc. Hah! Hah!” (Mukhopadhyaya 19) do give an anticlimactic turn to his otherwise serious criticism. However, this may also be seen as a technique to retain the interest of even the most uninformed reader who might easily stumble at the philosophical temper of this study.

**Review of K. V. Dominic's  
*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond***

**Dr. Laxmi R. Chauhan**

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*Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* is sixth collection of K. V. Dominic's poems after *Winged Reason*; *Write Son*, *Write*, *Multicultural Symphony*; *Abheepsa* and *K. V. Dominic: Essential Readings and Study Guide*. As the title reveals, the major theme dealt in the poems of this book is contemporary issues and concerns.

There are 38 poems in this collection which were composed in 18 months from 2014. Variety is one of the charms of Dominic's poetry and he has dealt with innumerable topics and incidents in this collection. The topics range from problems, tortures and tragedies of the marginalised like women, beggars, transgender, children, the old, and issues of war and peace, nature, environment, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, tribute to farmers and soldiers, philosophical thoughts, karma, spirituality, social issues and criticism, haiku etc.

The first poem in the anthology is "Salute to Farmers" showing the pleased and pained side of farming with various concerned issues being raised by the poet. The reader is forced to think in line of the poet and muse over the problems that are affecting the farmers today in spite of the fact that they are the

backbones of the nation. India still today is agriculture intensive country with 65% of total workforce depending on agriculture sector contributing about 14% in national GDP through agriculture produce. But often we hear about suicide cases of farmers from different regions. Moreover, their effort is never paid due cognition. Unsurprisingly the question arises – why are our farmers not happy? The reasons are many; one major concern of all is the interference of land mafias in sucking the land for builders and constructors. The plight of the farmers is very nicely portrayed here.

The poet shows his analogous distress about the mother earth in poems entitled “I can Hear the Groan of the Mother Earth” and “Mother India, I weep ...” The Earth’s natural resources are vivacious to the survival and development of the human population. Nevertheless, these resources are scanty by the Earth’s capability to renew them. Freshwater, forests and harvesting products are renewable, as long as that exploitation does not exceed regeneration. Although many effects of overexploitation are felt locally, the growing dependence of human in natural resources, make their demand and management a global issue. “Mother India, I weep ...” is about the forgotten and lost glory of India. How our (politicians and business tycoons) karmas have changed the face of our country and left it deserted and ruined even more than what the foreign invaders had done. Forgotten is the sacrifice of the martyrs. “Tribute to Siachen Martyrs” brings to life the picture of the soldiers who lost lives for their motherland. The poet in this poem mentions the name of different soldiers patrolling Siachen Glacier to recover bodies of their friends who forfeited their lives in pursuit to attain the ultimate gallant, to protect their country even in those harsh conditions. The poem reminds us of the cozy sleep that we take with our family members. The

unreasonableness of war is bared, the sacrifice of the precious life is so thanklessly acknowledged in both countries. If only we had heart for these sacrifices we would see the seeds of peace, love and compassion across the borders.

In "Salute to Soldiers" the poet gives special stature to the soldiers differentiating them from the rest of the human beings as they have the unique quality of being selfless. Owing to their disciplined, systematic, honest and highly patriotic life the poet calls them the precious children of the nation for the National emotions win over domestic attachment.

Many of the poems of *Contemporary Concerns* are inspired by the newspapers articles which poet must have read every day. It seems a common concern but how many of us really give it a musing, transforming it into memorable poems? The disquiet is always there but the moment we put away the newspaper it is folded away and left on the corner of the table without ever being raised again. Then next morning we have a new paper in our hands giving fresh thought to our mind once again. This is the creativity born out of a concerned mind that has got sagacity and receptivity. The morning news leaves us troubled many a times giving us a feeling of uneasiness which raises question in our conscience. What exactly are we doing to resolve these issues?

The revolution is not created in a day but humanity always needs someone to stir their thought to churn out the consciousness that is required to be brought to the surface to initiate a change. The poet in his concern has raised numerous such burning issues which are overlooked in our day to day life but a serious remark has been drawn so that it attracts the attention of the readers.

All the poems in this collection need special references but one really caught my attention due to its horrifying details it is "A Cremator's Struggle for Existence." The job of cremator is perturbing which demands the strength not only of mind but also of emotions when specially this job is performed by a woman who needs survival not just for herself but for her two daughters deserted by their father. Adding to its effect, cremating up to twenty bodies some of which are medicine addict make it an ordeal to burn them. Most of the relatives don't stand long to burn the bodies completely and the lady cremator is left alone with the explosive sounds of the crushing bones in the deepening night which gives her an earnings of 450 rupees for each corpse to voyage her life along with two daughters.

The hardship of the city life is also reflected in poems "Beggars and Animals," and "Circus Rani, Queen of Woes." But in the destitution they face the strength to stand above the human worries that yoke all the rest leading a customary life thawing themselves with other fellow creatures. The god becomes their savior and protector, freeing them from all concern of tomorrow.

The burning issue of the contemporary world is gigantically increasing crime rate which is the prime concern of every human being living on this earth either it's through terrorism or the internal disrupt that we observe in our everyday life. "Child Trafficking" reveals it in shocking way. The minute details of the crime committed gives goose bumps in divulging the exploitation of the tender aged kids. The young girls being forced into prostitution, some sold as slave and some sold for organs which are nerve raising facts of the problems we see in our country today. We the so-called educated people have turned a blind eye towards it. We seem congenitally corrupt to have

overlooked these subjects. It shows our moral ambiguity as there is no real stigma for us.

Apart from the turmoil of the contemporary life the poet also has shown hope in his writing with poems like “Aboobaker, Poor Patients’ Saviour,” “An Airport Made of Tears,” “Lesson from Fruit Trees,” “Mahadeva Prasad, Saviour of Deserted Girls,” “Shinu’s Marathon for Charity” and “Tribute to SAI Sanctuary.” The determination with which each of the character in these poems has their smidgeon to improve the face of humanity is laudable. Reading these poems gives us a sense of hope that humanity is not extinct which we often cry of. The desire or instinct to do something for others always is present dormant at the corner of our hearts, what we require is an initiation that would stir us to move towards it. All these poems need special mention but “Tribute to SAI Sanctuary” is really a panorama of how a man could rise above the greed of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ contributing everything worth a penny for the furtherance of the fellow creature. One poem worth mentioning that explains the whole of this concept of action is “Karma is Akarma” in the words of poet, “One who knows it (karma) reigns kingdom of wisdom.” To help others one doesn’t require being a king of riches. Moreover, there is a Chinese saying that goes: “If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.” For ages, the greatest philosophers and thinkers have suggested the same: Happiness is found in helping others and the true vision of paradise is that smile seen on the face of the helped. On a conversation over email Prof. Dominic had revealed that, “... the title explicitly proclaims my purpose in writing my poems. I take this as a mission or vocation entrusted on me by God. I want to prove that what the clergy teaches is not what God ultimately wants to teach his children. The man

made scriptures have no divinity at all since the clergy interprets them as they like for their exploitation of the laity. Hence my poetry is a kind of Bible which teaches to love all creations and be a part of the infinite flow and rhythm of the universe.” How do we expect the clergies and pundits to be? They need not teach us from altars of temples and churches but to come face to face with the reality of life as is seen by the poet.

This is also found in researches that giving is a powerful pathway that leads to personal growth and lasting happiness. Experiments show evidence that philanthropy is hardwired in the brain – and it’s gratifying. Helping others may just be the secret to living a life that is not only happier but also healthier, wealthier, more productive, and meaningful. In his poem “Eating Gives Bliss” the poet shares similar feeling about the bliss we experience in feeding others. It is this state which according to poet is the state of heaven. “Venkatachalam, Saviour of the Old” is another poem which is soul rending where poet again shows the two different faces of mankind: One evil and other virtuous! The parents who once nurtured their kids are today deserted by their own grown up children. Venkatachalam shines as a star of hope in their life since twenty-five years. Venkatachalam himself is proceeding towards sixties but irrespective of his growing age he remains an example for the society which always looks up to govt., NGO or help organisation for meager help. We have idolised the face of god in poster and idols but forget His divine message that he is always there to help us disguised in different forms and faces.

The spirit of the reader is taken to higher level with “What is Karma?” The poet reflects on the Indian philosophy which is richest mine of any riddle associated to karma. He talks of three different types of karma: Tamasik, Rajasik and Satvik that dominates all the lives in this world and determine our destination giving us the lesson of realisation that leads to

learning of the truth 'ahambrahmasmi'. In "What is Spirituality?" the poet imparts the true meaning of spirituality; it is not in worshipping the God but in service of the mankind.

Realisation of the good karma and bad karma would lead us to a better world. If only we learn the law of the Nature and abide by it the world logically would be *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The human intelligence has made him narrow instead of widening his vision. He has forgotten the law of nature that crafts a balance in the world. Instead of uniting the world with love we are creating divisions of classes, colour, caste, religion, language, politics, and nations, promoting hatred. When millions die in hunger, trillions are spent for armament in this blind chase for comfort and luxuries. Poet urges all to make collective efforts of nation to stand by the eternal laws of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

"Haiku" written by Dominic needs special mention which is Japanese form of poetry. Well, here I had a feeling of being in my poetry scansion class and in fact I enjoyed the symmetric distribution of syllables throughout the Haiku. The first and last lines of a Haiku have 5 syllables and the middle line has 7 syllables expressing a single feeling or impression. The lines rarely rhyme. Here I would say, I loved both the technique and the theme written in Haiku which represented the very unique and outstanding style of the poet to encapsulate the entire anthology. Unabridgedly the anthology reflects the unresolved outlook of the poet about the world around him which he perceives everyday with an inquisitive awareness and responsiveness.

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**Review of K. V. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion: A Collection of Poems***

**Dr. Sangeeta Mahesh**

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“We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not;  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell  
Of saddest thought.”

Percy Bysshe Shelley

In *Cataracts of Compassion* by Dr. K. V. Dominic we find the same pain for various social evils in the society and lack of humanity in the world. Prof. Dr. K. V. Dominic is a renowned English poet, critic, short story writer and Editor from Kerala, India. Dominic's *Cataracts of Compassion* is a collection of thirty four poems which covers myriad issues like poverty, religious exploitations, environmental issues, corruptions in the society, terrorism, cruelty to women, children, old, and animals, gender discriminations, ageism, etc. The poet himself says in his Preface, “*I have been trying my maximum to avoid repetition of themes and topics in my poetry. But however hard I attempt, there are some burning issues which resurge or ruminate into my mind again and again and I am compelled to write on them*” (11). Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, a philosopher, critic & poet of West Bengal in his Foreword to the book says, “*... the personal grief, unlike those of*

*a few romantic poets, has not goaded Dominic to write poems. In the face of the information revolution Dominic's person is such an instrument that responds to the wails of men and animals and birds and insects" (8).*

The book opens with the prayer to Lord Buddha for the enlightenment. The poet prays:

Enlighten us Lord Buddha  
radiating rays of wisdom  
to our minds groping in darkness  
You are the sun among  
all stars of seers who  
lived on this planet (15)

Gautam Buddha was a prince with immense wealth and riches but he had deep pity for the sufferings of humanity and one day he decided to renounce all his wealth and kingdom and set out in search of peace and humanity and for the service of mankind. Dominic also feels the pain of man-made human sufferings and this is well reflected in the following lines:

Children who know  
very well how they  
were loved and reared  
desert their parents  
when old and weak  
Leave them in  
old age homes,  
hospitals, jungles  
buses and trains  
Compassion is alien  
in families among siblings  
Affluent ones are  
apathetic to miserable ones  
Even ungrateful to  
those who brought them up  
Servants are treated  
worse than animals  
Rulers and civil servants

exploit people who feed them  
Clergies thrive as parasites  
on gullible slavish laity  
The rich give deaf ear  
to hunger cries of neighbours  
and throw away  
remnants of their plates  
Developed countries  
are indifferent to  
millions dying of hunger  
in other states(18)

He concludes the poem with the lines:

Enlighten us Lord Buddha  
Your outlook is broader than  
other schools of religious thoughts  
Every religion advises us  
to love fellow humans  
some even teach to love  
their own followers more  
But you taught us to show  
equal care and compassion  
to all creatures of this world  
destruction of any creature  
is disturbance of universal order  
Hence enlighten the world Lord Buddha  
and fill this planet with peace and happiness(23)

In the next poem, 'A Poetic Tribute to Mahasweta Devi', he sings in Praise of Mahasweta Devi, who was the '*crusader of the downtrodden, tribals, dalits, women, landless, migrants, prostitutes*' (24). In the poem 'African Poverty', he expresses his grief over the waste of food by the rich countries while '*Millions of starving people – children, women / old stretch their hands with begging bowls / for remnants of other peoples' food*' (26). In the poem 'Angels as Refugees', he contemplates over the condition of innocent children from South Sudan, who have become homeless due to the 'civil war waged for silly reasons.'

Dominic narrates 'the tragic tale' of the female circus artist in the poem 'Circus Rani, Queen of Woes'.

Rani's beauty has been waning  
Age can't be controlled  
She knows she will have to say goodbye  
when the body can't be agile and supple  
Where will she go and who will take her as bride?  
Such burning answerless questions  
wound her as she performs each her skill (30-31)

In 'Housemaid's Dream' he gives expression to the dreams of a housemaid, a baby sitter, who while doing her job in a happy family visualises the kind of life for herself but knows that this cannot be true as "*poor people are destined to dream and dream...*" (38)

'I am an Indian Young Widow' shows his concern for the condition of an Indian young widow in our society. A widow does not generally get the needed support from society. She feels insecure and alone to battle the struggle of life.

Hellish is the life of an Indian widow  
Tragic and nightmarish if she is young  
Patriarchy doesn't allow her to survive  
Eagles fly over her wherever she goes  
When she craves for love and sympathy  
society rends her bleeding heart  
shooting arrows of repulsive words  
Curses hurl on her from in-law's house  
Burden for her parents (40)

In the poem 'I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth' he wails over the exploitation of the mother Earth by her 'own beloved human sons'. 'In Search of Impartial Reports' is a very pungent satire on today's media. Reports presented by TV channels are partial and sometimes fake:

Journalists ignore their pledges  
and deviate from ethics  
Instead of calling a spade a spade  
they make a goat a dog  
a saint a sinner or sinner a saint (42)

In the poem 'Irrational Discriminations', he criticizes the discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and colour. He writes:

Aren't your bodies same once skin is removed?  
Isn't same red coloured blood passing through  
Whites, Blacks, Brahmins and Shudras? (43)

Being a humanitarian poet, he gives the message to the people:

When you need urgent blood for your ailing body  
your irrational discrimination disappears  
Kindly learn basics of your universe  
Variety and multicultural unity  
beauty of your sustaining universe (43)

In the poem 'Murder of Freedom of Expression' the poet recalls the dreadful incident of the cruel murder of Gauri Lankesh, a renowned journalist aged 55. So many other writers and activists were also shot dead by extremists and fanatic militant groups for raising their voice 'against superstition and communalism'. He ends the poem with a very sensible question:

Isn't duty of democratic governments  
To protect the lives of their guardian angels? (50)

Dominic's love and concern towards all creatures, whether animals, birds or insects is well reflected in the poems like 'Musings on the Killing of a Tiger', 'Wails of Mosquitoes and Elephants' and 'What's Wrong with Me?' etc. 'No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds' shows his concern for nature. 'Pricking Questions from the Grandson' is a beautiful poem that very

emphatically awakens the human conscience through the witty and intelligent dialogues of an innocent child:

Unlike your humane parents  
 your generation proved inhuman  
 and mercilessly exploited  
 the bounties of this planet  
 and drank to the lees  
 not leaving anything  
 for our generation's survival. (56)

'Triplets of Wisdom' are the finest example of his poetry skills. Every triplet contains deep meaning with an important message for mankind. In the poem 'What is Spirituality?' he emphasizes that the service of mankind is greater than '*worshipping God in abstract terms*'. (66)

Thus we can say that *Cataracts of Compassion* is a rainbow of poems, of multifarious themes, beautifully arranged in a style that not only appeal to the aesthetic senses but also invoke the sensitivity and prick the conscience of the readers. Dominic's poetry does not take you to the beautiful glittering, imaginative dreamland or any tinsel town but take you to the real world with harsh realities of life. Reading this collection of poems is like treading on the path full of piercing pebbles and through these poems, the poet has tried to motivate and guide the human beings that these pebbles have been laid down by themselves and they can make this path smooth and enjoyable by their own efforts.

## WORK CITED

Dominic, K. V. *Cataracts of Compassion: A Collection of Poems*. Authorspress, 2017.

## Explication of K. V. Dominic's “Salute to Farmers”

Nandita Bhattacharya

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Dear Readers! Have you ever seen a leading media to cover the story of a farmer? When a farmer has to commit suicide because he cannot pay back the debt to the bank, the news sometimes is covered casually by the media people at the corner of an inside page. The media people are after TRP/News value. They cover the news which has market value. They do not bother about their responsibilities to the society.

Recently the farmers decided not to supply anything to the cities or towns until and unless they were heard. 12 days passed by. There was price-hike of everything in the market. The media is indifferent into such issues. Perhaps for them it has no importance. Nevertheless after a few days the social media started discussing the issue with mock seriousness that reminds us of Dryden's classic *Mac Flecknoe*. In fact most of the newspaper coverage's seem to be mock heroic in essence. There was a lot of hue and cry against the media and the media has compelled to give lip service to the legitimate demands and sorrow mickle of the farmers. The political leaders were yet silent on the issue. In fact they have been silent of the issues as to farmers since we got independence.

K. V. Dominic starts his poetry book *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* with a salute to farmers. Yes this is the title of the first poem of his book. With him

Farming, noblest of all callings  
Most terrestrial and natural...

Food clothing and shelter are the three basic needs of a man though some other needs like health education etc. which are added after. The farmers provide us food. After hard toil they grow it. They are beckoned by the Mother Earth who asks them to dig out treasures from her loving chest. Treasure implies something valuable. There are water, ore, and precious gems hidden under the earth. Soil is the body of the Mother Earth. It is overflowing with the milk and honey for every living organism under the sun. With the poet the soil is our mother, so with the farmers. That is why they dig her with all gentleness. A son cannot hurt his mother. And a mother always happily gives everything she possesses to her child. The way mother feeds her baby when the baby is in her womb as an embryo, similarly Mother Earth feeds us. And the farmers make it possible with the help of spades, ploughs and harrows. Since the farmers are the children of the Mother Earth, they cannot hurt their mother.

Farmers gently hunt out using  
spades, ploughs, harrows etc.

Hence the poet calls farming the noblest of all calling as the farmers do it lovingly. The poet pays his respects and love to the farmers in the first seven lines. The love and affection between the Mother Earth and the farmer son mellow our heart. It arouses a feeling of love and care in the core of the heart of the readers.

Side by side with the farmer-sons, mafia-sons are there. The mafias loot. They are sans hearts. They are greedy. The poet describes them:

Wicked mafia sons suck her blood  
Inject venoms to her veins  
and even rape her to death.

These lines put into one's mind the huge use of chemical manure and pesticide in the land just to have more and more crops. They are not happy with what Mother Earth offers them spontaneously. They need more. Their greed for money cannot be quenched. They do not mind to suck her blood. They are not happy with the milk which Mother happily gives. They inject poison to have more crops and she is raped to death. They plunder the land resource. As a result the alkaline percentage in the soil increases which spoils the fertility of the soil.

With the poet "How pleasurable farming is!"

The use of the note of exclamation implies that the poet himself is as if experiencing the pleasure of farming. He is identified with the farmers. The farmers get up early in the morning. The plants they grow are but their children. The earth is the mother of the farmers. When they grow plants on the mother earth those plants allure them as if the latter are their children. Thus there is a family bonding between them. The farmers care them and watch their everyday growth.

When they find plants' growth  
leaf after leaf and flower after flower  
and fruit after fruit to getting to ripen

They become happy to see the plant grow just like parents become happy to see their children grow. Here the poet himself is identified with the farmers or he himself is the farmer who is happy to see the plants grow. The love and care of the farmers

make a plant grow, load and bless with fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run; to bend with mangos the moss'd cottage-trees, and fill all fruit with ripeness to the core. Dominic as a poet evokes in us the simplicity and sensuousness of Keats.

Once again their eyes are drowned in tears when they see their plant die because of bad weather. The farmers who love the soil and the plants that grow on it are providing food to the nation. But it is a pity that the nation does not bother to recognise their toil. They never reward a farmer for his wonderful job. Even they never help them so that they can grow food for them. The farmers have to depend on the fads of the weather. If there is rain they can plough; if not, they cannot grow. In most of the places there is no irrigation facility. Where there are canals to facilitate the farmers most of those canals are left without water during the season of cultivation. The food providers of the country have only tales of tears. These farmers thus have been neglected generation after generation.

The hard toil of these farmers has never been taken into account. They sweat and drudge and grow the crops for us. They do not get the price of their toil. The mafias loot them. They are exploited and do not get the right price for the crops they grow. The peasants of our country starve and commit suicide.

The poet unlike others is grateful to the farmers. He salutes them. This is unique. None perhaps salutes the farmers. We salute the soldiers, ministers, leaders but we never salute our food providers. The poet delineates the life of the farmers very humbly.

The language of K. V. Dominic is very simple. He does not coin so called fiery words or jargons in his poems. He though points at the dirty play of the mafias but he does not use any

hard words for them. Rather an undertone of love is felt everywhere in this poem. Any layman can understand him. He does not shed crocodile tears for the farmers. His love for both farmers and their way of life are reflected in every line of his poem.



# INTERVIEWS



## **Revelations of a Pantheistic Poet: Dr. K.V. Dominic in Conversation**

**Goutam Karmakar**

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(This Interview was published originally In 4.2 August 2017 Issue Of *Writers In Conversation*, Flinders University Journal, Australia)

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** Since no autobiography of you has been published, readers would like to know about your early days. Can you please tell your readers a bit about your childhood days, schooling and college days? And do your childhood memories and parents cast any influence and inspiration for your writing?

**A.** I belong to a below average middle class family. I am the fourth son of the six children family. I have no sisters. My father and mother, who are no more, were not educated – could only read and write in their mother tongue, Malayalam. They worked hard to look after us and we never had to starve. I was just an average pupil in school – not very studious. I was not smart enough and to some extent reserved in making friendship with others. In my under graduate college days I grew smart enough to be the leader of the class. The influence of my parents is on my

character and conduct – honest, sincere, truthful, gentle and compassionate to all including non-human beings.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You have dedicated your *Winged Reason* to your beloved father Varghese Kannappilly. Your poems like *Maternal Attachment*, *Parental Duty* show your great concern for parents. But poems like *Parents Deserted*, *Gayatri's Solitude* present the worse picture of age old parents. How have you presented the problem of the old and the younger generation's attitude towards it? You also believe that human life is a cycle where today's torturer become tomorrow's victim. Kindly elaborate this a bit.

**A.** The generation gap at present is very wide and unbridgeable. My parents and that generation were very loving and caring to their parents as well as to their children. They had to work really hard to sustain the families, whereas the new generation or youth are not so caring and considerate to their parents. They are generally lazy and are not prepared to take pain to look after their parents. So to say, they are more selfish than their parents. That's the reason why many of them discard their parents to old age homes or anywhere seeking their own comforts and luxury. In doing so they never think that it is a vicious cycle and that one day they will also be discarded by their own children.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** It seems that you have been greatly influenced by Jayanta Mahapatra. So kindly tell us how have you been influenced by him? Apart from him who are those philosophers and poets who have influenced you to write verse?

**A.** Jayanta Mahapatra is the greatest contemporary Indian poet in English. I have edited a critical book on him clubbing with five other less established poets. I have met him

several times, invited him for our GIEWEC literary festival and been fortunate to be with him for five days at Pondicherry Central University. There GIEWEC honoured him with LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD. He is like an elder brother to me. I have taught his poems and essays in college. Though some of his poems are difficult to grasp and obscure in that sense, his use of language, imagery, symbolism and such stylistic aspects as well as the depth of the themes attracted me. The message in his article “Piercing the Rocks: Silence to Poetry” influenced me a lot in my compositions. He states that “Poetry has always been responsible to life. By this, one means that a poet is first of all responsible to his or her own conscience; otherwise he or she cannot be called a poet. And may be the other factors necessary to the makings of a good poet will only come later. These may ordinarily imply the craft, or the language the poet will use with skill in his poems. But somehow, these appear as frills in a poem that is already full with feeling, because the poem would have already done what it was meant to do; in other words, touch another human being, before one came to notice the other qualities of the poem.” I care more on content or message of the poem than its style. Apart from him the Romantics and Victorians, Robert Frost, Indian poets Tagore, Ezekiel, philosophers like the Buddha, Christ, Gandhi, Nehru, Marx, Swami Vivekananda, Darwin, Sree Narayana, Said, Fanon and the scriptures The New Testament, The Vedas, and epics Mahabharata and Ramayana etc. have influenced me in my compositions.

- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You are a late bloomer in this arena. But why have you started to begin with poetry leaving other genres of writing? How have you been able to hear the

song of the Muse, better call it Cuckoo (your given name to Muse)? In this context can you tell why you have named the Muse as Cuckoo?

- A.** As I have written in my preface to *Write Son, Write*, “since poetry is the shortest form of literature, most captivating and didactic, I believe that in this busy, hustling world people should have a special attraction to poetry. Since reading habits of modern man diminish considerably and she/he substitutes that habit to watching TV and such visual media, I believe that it is my duty as a writer to promote poetry at any cost.”

The image of cuckoo for the poetic Muse came to me when I went through Stephen Gill's preface to his masterpiece *The Flame*. He has used the image of robins for the Muse. Cuckoos are found everywhere in our area and no birds sing sweeter than them. Hence I thought of concretising the Muse through cuckoo.

- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** In your debut poetic collection you have written two elegies namely “In Memoriam George Joson” and “Long Live E. K. Nayanar.” So what is your attitude to death? And where lies the similarities or differences between your elegies and those of from Gray, Tennyson or Arnold?

- A.** My attitude to death is very positive. I believe in the existence of the Creator and all His creations have to say goodbye when He calls back. I have written not two, but many elegies. “Ammini's Demise,” “Michael Jackson, King of Kings,” “Elegy on My Ma,” “Massacre of Cats,” “Tribute to Mohammed Rafi,” “To My Deceased Cats,” “Siachen Tragedy,” “Martyrs at the Borders,” and “Tribute to Siachen Martyrs” are all elegiac in tone. My best elegy is “Elegy on

My Ma.” Great poets Gray, Tennyson and Arnold have written long elegies with a special purpose and highly philosophic mind. And they have followed the norms of classical elegies to some extent. Many of my elegies are born from a really mourning mind. It was a vent to express my outburst of emotions. Of course I have added philosophies as well.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** Through your pen you have questioned about the inequality of the individuals mainly poorer sections, oppressed and the marginalised ones. So how have you tried to give them identity and individuality? And in doing that how have you tried to dissect injustices and corruptions at all levels?

**A.** I have portrayed the problems of the poor, the marginalised, women, weaker sections and the downtrodden in many of my poems. The injustices done to them by the five percent of the society, the rich and the government have been brought to the notice of the readers through these poems. I haven't exhorted these sections to rebel against the government or the rich for exploiting them. Rather I have been indirectly trying to make the rich and the government aware of these miserable ones' plight and do reparations for their exploitations. By establishing the eternal relation between God the Creator and Man and Nature I have been emphasizing the fact that all human beings are siblings and again they are siblings of other beings on earth. Hence it is one's duty to protect others and not exploit them. The concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and the universe as a single religion in place of diverse religions on earth are the driving force of my writings.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** There is a kind of dualism in your compositions. Sometimes you look so honest for your sensuous and vivid description and sometimes so brutal and pensive. How have you balanced this kind of dualism in your verse? And does this duality hold any specific purpose for you?

**A.** This duality is part of our life as well as world. As Shelley has stated “our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought” I have composed majority of my poems on the saddest thoughts. At the same time we find in nature as well as in our lives occasions and instances of mirth and happiness. I have portrayed them as to evoke positive and optimistic thinking which gives us boost to voyage on this turbulent sea of troublesome life.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You have dealt with poverty, religious harmony, suffering, corruption, unemployment, childhood, nature, environment, female foeticide, beauty, transgender, unemployment and many other issues. Among all these which issue has been able to catch your attention most? All these issues have been handled by other contemporary Indian poets writing in English. So where lies the unique poetic characteristics of K. V. Dominic?

**A.** I think that no other Indian poet in English has dealt with so deeply like me the issues of cruelty to animals and their relationship with human beings and relationship between God, Man and Nature. There lies my unique characteristic.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You are a poet, professor, critic, editor and short story writer. So can you please tell me how you are managing your time schedule? And how have you diverted your energy in so many ways?

- A.** True, I am involved with many activities at the same time. Editing four issues of two international refereed journals takes much of my time. Being the secretary of Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics (GIEWEC) having 250 members – all writers, professors and research scholars, I will have to reply to their emails, at an average of some twenty replies every day. Besides editing of my edited books and after all these activities I have to find time for my creative writings. Moreover there will be several phone calls from the members and friends every day which have to be attended to without any lapse. I am a responsible husband and a father and so I will have to find time to complete my domestic duties. In spite of all these busy schedules I go to bed at 11 or 11.30 pm and get up at 5 am and take a siesta for one hour after lunch.
- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** Your dealing with nature, your philosophy of beauty, the mysticism and sensuousness cast you as a man of Romantic sensibilities. How far would you like to call yourself a Romantic one? And does your writing in free verse serve any specific purpose for you?
- A.** Actually I am not following any school or there isn't any direct influence of any movements in my writing. True, you may find elements of Romanticism as well as Realism in my poetry. When an idea or an emotion comes to my mind I don't want to strain much to put them on paper. I am least bothered about rhyme or stanzaic patterns. I am very particular about the diction to be very simple as well as apt and rhythmic. Alliteration and assonance, if at all any, come unawares. So to say the difference between prose and poetry is very thin in my poetry.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** In one interview you have said that “Write My Son, Write” is your favourite poem as it is a document of your philosophy and views. So how have you manifested your views and philosophies here? A part from this in which poems can we see autobiographical elements?

**A.** As I have stated in my prefaces to the poetry collections, Advaita philosophy and the Buddhist and Jain thoughts have exerted great influence on me and my writings. In my magnum opus “Write My Son, Write” in twenty one sections, using God the Father as my mouthpiece, I have manifested my philosophic views. God the Father reminds His human children of their role and position in this world among the multitudes of other children. He also points out to them their disabilities and warns them not to boast of their superiority or treat sub humans as their slaves or torture them or kill for their comforts and luxuries. God exhorts human beings to flow with the system and never play discordant notes in the multicultural, universal eternal symphony.

“Multicultural Harmony” is another philosophic poem in six sections. There the poet himself is addressing his fellow beings and reminds them of the need of multicultural coexistence in this world. Autobiographical elements are there in some other poems. Elegiac poems such as “Ammini’s Demise,” “Elegy on My Ma,” “Massacre of Cats,” “To My Deceased Cats,” are autobiographical. “Helen and her World” is another autobiographical poem.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You have been influenced by three philosophies namely Hindu, Jain and Buddhist. How far do these three philosophies shape your creative faculty? And in

this context your readers want to know how far your upbringing as a Christian influences your writing?

**A.** The inspiration for my love for all creations of this universe – humans, non-humans, plants and lifeless objects – springs from the philosophies of Hindu, Jain and the Buddhist. One of the main themes of my poetry is this relation between God, Man and Nature. Though I am born as a Christian I am not tied to the practices of Christianity. I deem all religions equal. In fact my religion is universal religion, which preaches to love all creations of the world and show discriminations to none. I believe in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. This love is the theme of majority of my poems. Christ has been a great influence to me. I consider Jesus Christ as one of the finest souls lived on earth. His preaching on the theme of love influenced me a lot. He was indeed a revolutionary – stood for the poor and downtrodden and lived among them. He was crucified by the clergy, and now the corrupt, worldly clergy is crucifying him daily. I agree cent percent to Gandhi's view "I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." I have been criticizing this anti-Christian way of life of the Christians through my poetry and short stories.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You have discussed a lot about the condition of women in our society. How have you presented the problems faced by women? And do you think that women are venerable?

**A.** True, I have composed several poems about the condition of women in our society. I have also attacked the root cause of their problems – the element of patriarchy. Through several women characters – fictional as well as historical – I have

portrayed the issues and problems. No doubt women are venerable. I repeat my lines from "Multicultural Harmony": "Woman is most venerable / for she is your mother / she is nurse and teacher / and above all / she is the lamp of house." Men very often fail to measure the quantity of work women do in their houses. They have to bear children in their wombs for nine months, give birth to them painfully, feed them and rear them. Very often they are not able to sleep well when they have feeding babies with them while their husbands will be fast asleep. I am talking about the majority of women who belongs to the average and poor class. Again they will have to work hard in their kitchens, and then on their farms or as labourers to look after the family. Most often women are more dutiful and hardworking compared to men. What they have earned is spent for the family, while a good share of their husbands' earnings is spent in the liquor shops and bars.

- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** Poetry is the criticism of life. How have you proved this dictum stronger? It is very much clear that from the very beginning you have taken the role of a social reformer. So how have your compositions worked as an agent of social reformation?
- A.** The primary duty of a poet or a writer is to point out the drawbacks as well as evil practices of his fellowmen. His writings should act as a correcting force to the society. A poet is a man having more sensibilities and moral consciousness than ordinary people. Hence it is his duty to educate the masses. The ultimate aim of our life is attainment of happiness. But one's happiness shall not be a cause for another's sorrow. So how can everyone attain happiness causing sorrows to none is the economics the world needs. This universe is a big concert, enjoyable and it

is the duty of everyone to play concordant notes and not discordant notes of this huge symphony. The poet should teach the society to play this harmonious note. In fact very few play concordant notes and flow with the system. Huge majority play discordant notes and disrupt the eternal flow of the universe. That exactly is what I have been pointing out through my poetry and short stories.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** You are a poet deeply rooted with your native culture and land. So how have you presented the surrounding and culture of Kerala in your works? And what makes you truly a poet of Indian sensibilities?

**A.** No poet can remain in the sky and write about fictitious things having no connection with reality. His feet are rooted on the place he belongs to. He can't shut his eyes and write. He is bound to observe things happening around him. Similarly he can't write of a people and culture which he is unfamiliar of. Rooted in Kerala I have access and familiarity to the locale and people around me and I write on them. This is what exactly other poets and writers are doing.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** It is very much clear that you are quite disappointed with the Man who is according to you the cruelest and ungrateful creation of God. Why do you think so and are you ashamed of being a part of human kind? In this context kindly tell what kind of utopian society and role of man do you dream of?

**A.** Taking into account the universe as a big house and God the Creator as the father and all creations as His children, Man is the cruelest and ungrateful child of God because he alone disobeys and disrupts the eternal flow of the universe; he alone plays discordant notes of His symphony. Man is trying to annihilate the entire life on earth. The

damages he does to Nature and environment may lead to total annihilation. At the same time using his brain he has done unimaginable wonderful things which other species can't do. I am not ashamed of being a part of human kind. My purpose is to make human beings aware of the destruction they have been doing on the earth. I believe that what I have been feeling, or many other poets like me have been feeling, can be felt by all human beings if they are made aware of. Thus this world can be made a better place. It is not a utopian world or society which I am seeking.

**Q. Goutam Karmakar:** What are the perceptions of beauty of K. V. Dominic when he says that eternal beauty is in achievements eternal? And how far have you become aesthetic and transcendental while portraying Mother Nature?

**A.** I believe in the concept of a Creator and all creations in this world are His. Religions call Him God the Father. He is the eternal truth. He is the embodiment of beauty and all His creations are beautiful. Thus this universe and all its inhabitants – living and non-living are beautiful. Hence nothing is ugly to God, the Father. But man is not able to find this beauty in all creations. What is pleasurable to his eyes or other senses, he calls beautiful. My argument is that outer beauty which is transient or mortal lies on all creations whereas eternal beauty – beauty which gives eternal happiness lies in eternal achievements of man.

Nature is considered a mother because like a mother Nature feeds and protects the inhabitants. But her wicked sons, human beings, try to rape and even kill her.

- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** How will you like to define the term ‘Multicultural Symphony’ in the context of your works? And reading your poems often cast you as an existentialist, as a lifelong search for peace and harmony prevail there. Do you agree with me?
- A.** ‘Multicultural Symphony’ is the title I have given to my third collection of poems. The opening poem of the book is titled “Multicultural Harmony.” In that poem I have explained in six sections what I mean by multicultural symphony or harmony. Beauty of this universe lies in its diversity. Unity in diversity among human beings is termed as multiculturalism. There are innumerable religions, philosophies, languages and cultures among human beings. For a happy life on earth – the ultimate purpose of life – a harmonious existence of human beings in the midst of their heterogeneity is essential. That is what I mean by multicultural symphony.
- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** Poems like “A Sheep’s Wail,” “I am Just a Mango Tree,” “Nature Weeps,” “Attachments,” “Natures Bounties” show your concern for nature and the anthropocentric attitude of Man. So what are the roles you have tried to fulfill as an eco-socialist through your verse? And how have you presented the interconnectivity of God-Man-Nature in your compositions?
- A.** I believe in the teachings of science and my concept of religion is based on it. To me religion and science are twin sides of a coin. Unlike the biblical story of the creation of man I believe that man is an evolutionary being. Thus taking man as one among the multitudinous species of animals he can’t claim any superiority or mastery over other animals. It is our reasoning power which makes us think selfishly and assume ourselves as the chosen ones of the

Creator. God the Father can never discriminate or show partiality to one of his children (Men). He loves all creations equally and hates none. True, man has some distinctive features and powers. Other species also have such distinctive features and powers which we do not have. Hence there is no logical reason for us to claim any superiority or mastery over other species. The anthropocentric attitude of man is a crime and sin against Nature as well as the Creator. Man has to learn this truth and be humble enough to allow other beings and plants to live with him. He should be rational enough to think that other creations – non humans, plants and lifeless objects have equal right to this planet. Live and let others live should be our policy. We shall never exploit nature for our comforts and luxury. We can use the bounties of nature to serve our necessities – for our survival or existence as other animals do. Before you cut a tree for your shelter, another tree should be planted. The equilibrium of the planet should be maintained always.

- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** How far have you succeeded in your goal as a poet? The fight for a meaningful life has just started and a better world is yet to make. So definitely you are writing and please share with your readers about your future projects.
- A.** When I started writing I never thought that my poems would get this much reception from different parts of the world as it is now. I started composing very late in my life, only thirteen years back. I consider myself as a minor voice. By the grace of God the messages I convey through my poems hit the minds. More than fifty critical and research articles have been published on my poems. In addition to the four poetry collections published by Authorspress, New Delhi, one complete collection of my poems and another critical

book on my poetry came out from USA in 2016. Translations of my poetry in Hindi and Gujarati have been published. Similarly translations in Bengali, French, Telugu and Tamil are going on. Researches on my poetry for PhD have been begun by some scholars. These all show that I have succeeded in my goal as a poet. As for my future plan, I will go on writing on new themes and burning issues of the world. Changes in the attitudes and habits of man will not come suddenly, but gradually. I am very positive and optimistic and believe that a better world will be born.

- Q. Goutam Karmakar:** Your patriotism, your fight for the marginalised and oppressed sections give your poetry a postcolonial touch. And at the same time you're dealing with landscapes and social issues with the tools of irony, satire and humour which make you a poet of postmodern sensibilities. So how far would you like to define yourself? And what should be the role of younger generation of poets according to you?
- A.** Your analysis of my poems is right. You can label me as postcolonial and postmodern. What a poet ought to write now – that is exactly what I have been writing. I touch universal themes as well as national and regional. I live in a place which is semi urban. So I observe and experience both urban and rural things and issues. Since our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought, as Shelley says, my advice to the younger generation of poets is that they should concentrate more on saddest thought and be mouthpiece or spoke persons of the poor, down trodden, and the marginalised. They should fight against the cankers of the society. They should be protectors of the environment and nature.

## Prof. K. V. Dominic in a Conversation

Parthajit Ghosh

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(This interview was originally published in 30.2 July 2017 issue of *Poetcrit*)

**PG:** Good Evening, Prof. Dominic! Thank you very much for your kind consent for these series of email conversation!

**Dominic:** Good Evening dear Parthajit. I am only happy to converse with you.

**PG:** You have authored and edited more than twenty books of criticism on different literary genres, a collection of short stories and four individual anthologies of poems. Hence, you are a critic, writer and poet as well. In the last issue of *Poetcrit* (Jan-June 2017), Dr. Sulakshna Sharma in her review of your book, *K. V. Dominic: Essential Readings and Study Guide: Poems about Social Justice, Women's Rights, and the Environment*, has commented that “K. V. Dominic is a far better poet than a short story writer” (2017, 180). So, kindly tell us, in which do you feel about your best puissance – criticism, writing stories or composing poetry?

**Dominic:** What Dr. Sulakshna Sharma has observed is true. I too feel that I can wield poetry better than other genres of literature.

**PG:** Recently, in an interview with Dr. P. V. Laxmi Prasad, Prof. Manoj Das, an eminent *Sabitya Akademi* Award winning writer, said that “Poetry can best be written in one’s mother-tongue” (*Poetcrit* 30.1, 2017: 11). Malayalam is your native language and you write in English. So, will you kindly share the cognitive process of your composition? Or, is it a natural process to an English Professor?

**Dominic:** Let me admit frankly that I am very poor in using my mother tongue Malayalam in literature. I have such diffidence that my compositions would be a flop in Malayalam.

**PG:** In your fourth volume of poetry, *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* (2016), you have prefaced that “I have adopted a poetic style of my own and never try to imitate any predecessor or contemporary poet”. So, your poetry must be experimental in nature. Kindly elucidate your poetic style you have adopted.

**Dominic:** I believe that every poet has an individual style even if it is influenced by poetic style of others. In my case I haven’t deliberately imitated any one’s style. For me content of a poem is more important than its style. If there is a strong message in the poem I don’t care for its frills or vehicle. The only thing I care about regarding the style is that the lines should be rhythmic than pure prosaic. I use only free verse and never bother about rhymes. Majority of my poems is more narrative than lyrical. The difference between prose and poetry is very thin in my poems. Still my poems are appreciated because of the message and values they carry.

**PG:** In your poems the phrases like 'religious fundamentalism', 'multiculturalism', 'sexism', 'regionalism', 'parochialism', 'nationalism', 'patriotism', 'communalism' and many more '-isms' are frequently used. These types of philosophical terms are very common to be found in critic's disquisition on literary texts. Do you consciously use them as an experiment in your poetry? Or is it the influence of a practicing critic for long time on a poet?

**Dominic:** I am deliberately using these terms because they carry the burning issues of the contemporary world which I want to present before the readers. After all these terms are commonly used now and are familiar with the ordinary people.

**PG:** On reading your poems, especially 'Multicultural Harmony', 'Write, My Son, Write', 'Karma is Akarma', 'Tyag?', 'Vasudhaina Kutumbakam' and many others it may be said that Dominic philosophizes reality. How far do you agree with this?

**Dominic:** True, I have been philosophizing reality. I had a double purpose in mind in composing poems on these philosophical ideas. I wanted to elucidate these abstract terms as well as portray their application in reality.

**PG:** In 'Multicultural Harmony', you write: 'from atoms to the heavens / multiculturalism reigns', seems to be the offshoot of such pantheistic view as alluded in *Sri Isopanishad*: "*Isa vasyamidam sarvam yat kinca jagatyam jagat*" (Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by God). How far are you successful to moralise the reality representing *The Upanishad*?

**Dominic:** I am a pantheist and believe that everything comes from God, the Creator and hence divinity is there in all living beings and non-living objects. I have been greatly influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, the two greatest philosophies that originated from the land which gave birth to me.

**PG:** Another masterpiece, ‘Write, My Son, Write’, a long poem in 21 parts, begins with:

My son,  
I have a mission  
in your creation,  
God spoke  
To my ears.

It is as if you have listened to the oracle of God being “the right or correct son of the father figure”. And, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, the veteran poet and critic, in his disquisition, *K. V. Dominic’s Write, My Son, Write – Text and Interpretation: An Exercise in Close Reading* has established the Pagan relation to it and proved you as a ‘demigod’. How far do you believe that you are a demigod and your pen is your weapon gifted by God?

**Dominic:** Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya’s reference to me as a ‘demigod’ is only a hyperbole. True, the poem is in the form of an oracle of God. I am just an ordinary man and used this dramatic monologue style as to impart the messages to the readers in a convincing manner.

**PG:** you conclude ‘Multicultural Harmony’ urging for a single nation, ‘THE WORLD’ where:

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.

Rabindranath Tagore in his *Gitanjali* (song 35) discovers the 'heaven of freedom' "Where the world has not been broken up into fragments / By narrow domestic walls". How do you feel the influence of Tagore in this composition?

**Dominic:** All serious writers and thinkers dream of the unification of this world, a world without any walls or borders. They are all against divisions among people under any label. Hence I too thought in that line and composed many poems. I like Tagore's works but my compositions are not influenced by them.

**PG:** Prof. T. V. Reddy in his enormous work, *A Critical survey of Indo-English Poetry* has shown, "like most of the Keralites Dominic too comes under the influence of the Communist ideology". You bid 'Lal Salaam' to show your gratitude at the death of the thrice chief minister of your state, E. K. Nayanar; and, you have written a poem like 'Lal Salaam to Labour'. So, are you communist a poet?

**Dominic:** True I am a leftist poet who believes in the existence of the Creator. I am compassionate to the poor, downtrodden, the marginalised and women. Majority of my poems are about them and their burning issues and problems. I am all against exploitations in the name of religion and politics.

**PG:** Your poems like 'A Sheep's Wail', 'Cuckoo Singing', 'I am Just a Mango Tree', 'Nature's Bounties', 'Nature Weeps', 'Ammini's Lament', 'Ammini's Demise', 'Massacre of Cats', 'A Cow on the Lane' and many other prove that

you are a worshipper of peace and integrity. But, contradictory enough, you outrage, your disgust in 'A Blissful Voyage' from *Winged Reason* wishing:

I wish I were a bullet  
and shoot into the chest of that terrorist  
who compels that teenage boy  
to explode and kill that innocent mob.  
Are you such a revolutionary thinker who wishes to establish justice  
by bullet?

**Dominic:** Though I have written those lines in the tone of a revolutionary I am basically a worshipper of peace and integrity. Through those lines I have expressed my uncontrollable dislike to the activities of the terrorist. I haven't exploded such in any other poems.

**PG:** Creator, creation and creature – 'simple enough to learn the relation' – are the truth behind whole existence where mankind is never imagined to be divided into categories. How does this view motivate you to portray the envirealistic pen picture through your eco-poems? How far have you succeeded in seeking environmental justice to all creatures?

**Dominic:** This nature and environment have been exploited and destroyed by humans to such an extent that a total destruction is not far away. Hence it is the duty of writers and thinkers to make the people aware and alert of it. If we understand the relation between the Creator, creation and creature as well as the purpose behind the creation we will stop exploitation of the nature. Indiscriminate felling of trees and killing of animals have to be stopped for their survival as well as ours.

**PG:** You are considered as the voice of the subaltern, the suppressed or the Dalits. Have you ever felt suppressed in your own society that makes you to write?

**Dominic:** I have never been suppressed in my own society. But I can feel the suppression of others around me. I have written about the problems of the subaltern in the Indian scenario. And most of them are based on historical incidents

**PG:** A celebrated contemporary Bengali poet, my own favourite, Joy Goswami, impressively commented, "Within my lifespan, in my individual life and in the entire Earth, even at the outside of the Earth; whatever keeps going on are all the part of my Autobiography" (translated). Do you agree with that? How far is it appropriate to your poetry?

**Dominic:** In my case I have written much on what I have observed in the outside world than from autobiographical. Fortunately my life has been very smooth with very little problems.

**PG:** Your poems are studied and compared with some of your contemporaries, thematically and also critically. Kindly share your views on your contemporaries who influence your art of versification.

**Dominic:** As I stated earlier I have never tried to imitate any writer dead or living. I like many of my contemporaries but their poetic style has never influenced me. Like me they are also writing on the burning issues and problems of this world and naturally there will be comparisons among us thematically.

**PG:** Now-a-days, many an emerging poets are blooming out. Kindly tell me about such emerging poets whom you like most. What will be your suggestion to them?

**Dominic:** True, there are many emerging young talents. I don't want to mention any name. Some have concentrated more on the theme of love – quite naturally taking their age into consideration. There are a few young poets who are thinking very seriously like us, elder generation, and writing on more serious themes. My suggestion to all emerging poets is that they are the ones who have to live more in this fast degenerating world and hence it is their duty to convert the butcher culture minds of the younger generation.

**PG:** Kindly share about your new projects including all the other genres like stories, criticism and others.

**Dominic:** I have no such new projects in my mind. I will go on writing poems and short stories and get them published when they are sufficient for volumes. Similarly I will assist others to edit books and bring out as many critical books as possible.

**PG:** Thank you Prof. Dominic, for your precious time that you spared and spent with me! Thank you a lot!

**Dominic:** It was really pleasurable conversing with you dear Parthajit. God bless you!

## Interview with Prof. K. V. Dominic

Dr. Rohit Phutela

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(Originally published in 7.1 January 2017 issue IJML)

**RP:** Could you name a few most influential writers in your life?

**KVD:** British writers William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, John Milton, William Wordsworth, William Blake, Charles Lamb, P. B. Shelley, John Keats, Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Mathew Arnold, American poets Robert Frost and Emily Dickenson, Indian Writers in English Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Nissim Ezekiel, R. K. Narayan and Jayanta Mahapatra are the writers I like most. My poetry is mainly influenced by philosophers and philosophical writings. They include the Buddha, Christ, Adi Sankara, Swami Vivekananda, Sree Narayana Guru, The Mahabharata, The Ramayana, The Vedas, The Upanishads, The Bhagavat Gita etc.

**RP:** Can you give an introduction on the birth of a poet in you?

**KVD:** I started writing poetry seriously very late in my life, at the age of 48. The reason why the poetic muse eluded me till I was forty-eight might be that my life had gone smooth and comfortable without much itching of mind or arrows struck into it. As Jayanta Mahapatra wrote, poetry comes

out of a “bad heart” – a heart that makes one turn secretly into a leader or a loser, pushing one to choose values, attitudes and do the not-so-obvious things (Mahapatra, “Piercing the Rocks: Silence to Poetry”). I do believe that I matured very late, at the age of forty eight, to be able to choose values and impart them to my students as well as to the readers of my poems. I could find that even though the world is progressing materialistically at a rapid speed using modern science and technology, spiritually or morally it is degenerating at the same speed. The material progress is concentrated only on a single digit percent of the people and the vast majority is exploited by this millionaire minority. The wealth of the planet should be distributed evenly among its inhabitants – humans, non-humans and plants. Exploitation of the vast majority is visible in all fields of life – politics, religion, etc. Administrators and political leaders of the nations as well as leaders of all religions are exploiting the innocence and ignorance of the laity. I would like to see a revolution or radical change in this world. I dream of a socialistic world. Poetry seems to me the best medium to express my views and through my poems I want to impart some messages to the readers. The more they read my poems the happier I am.

**RP:** What is the capital idea of your writings?

**KVD:** People today are crazy after materialism, and divinity in them is being lost to such an extent that they give no importance to principles, values, family and social relations, cohabitation with human beings and other beings. Instead they are trying their maximum to exploit their fellow beings, other beings and the planet itself. If it goes like this, the total destruction is not far away. It is the duty of the religious leaders, political leaders and the intelligentsia to inject the lost values to the masses and thus preserve this

planet and the inhabitants from the imminent devastation. Instead, majority of these leaders become mafias and inject communal and corruptive venom to the minds of the masses. Corruption has become the hallmark of these leaders and influenced by them the masses also deviate from the right track to the evil track. And who will save this society? My answer is: writers, particularly poets who are like prophets. The major theme of my poetry is the eternal relationship between Man, Nature and God. Though baptized a Christian, I am primarily an Indian, and it is my duty as a teacher and poet to instil Indian values to my students and countrymen and also propagate these noble values to the rest of the world. I believe in the concept of jeevatma and paramatma (individual soul and universal soul) and that all living beings are part of paramatma or God. Again I believe in the Indian concept of *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am the God). Advaita seems to me more reasonable and acceptable than Dvaita. Thus 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.

Disparities in society, problems of the poor, the down-trodden, the marginalised and the old, politics, terrorism, communalism, corruption and exploitation by political parties and religions, description of Nature, multiculturalism, global warming, conservation, horoscope, casteism, dignity of labour, child labour, poverty, unemployment, environmental issues, celebration of man's intelligence, skills and selfless service for society are the main themes of my poetry.

**RP:** Why independent India failed to produce another R.N. Tagore?

**KVD:** Versatile geniuses like Rabindranath Tagore are seldom born. We haven't got another Shakespeare even after four centuries. If you ask why India hasn't got another Nobel laureate for literature my answer is that there were no western promoters like W. B. Yeats for any Indian writer after Tagore. I genuinely feel that there have been many Indian writers, both in regional languages as well as English, who could be awarded the Nobel.

**RP:** Do the writers in India including you enjoy the real freedom to create literary work

**KVD:** It's a pity that we have limited freedom of speech in India. Though India is a democratic country one has to be very careful when one writes. Unlike the western countries, religion has become a passion or weakness to the people. In fact it exerts venomous influence in the minds of the people. Reason gives way to blind faith which is much often superstitious. So a writer has to be very vigilant when he writes on religious matters.

**RP:** What is your opinion about web-journals and magazines for poetry?

**KVD:** Web journals and magazines give much opportunity for budding poets who can't afford to get a publisher for his printed volume. As printing business has become less profitable and expensive, particularly for creative works of less established and emerging writers, web journals and magazines do a great service to vent out emotions and imaginations of such writers.

**RP:** How do you foresee the future of Indian English writing?

**KVD:** Indian writing in English has bright future. It has become as competent as British, American, Canadian, Australian and African Literature. We have already had four Booker

prize winners. Indian English has its own characteristics. Influences of Indian regional languages make it distinct from other Englishes. So Indian literature in English shall not be compared with other English literatures. The real struggle for Indian literature in English is from within the country. The government – both Central and State – do not promote it as they promote vernacular literatures.

**RP:** Absolutely. How does globalisation affect poetry?

**KVD:** Globalisation is the offshoot of capitalism or materialism. As dissemination of ideas and culture across the world occurred as the result of globalisation, poetry gained something. The poem one writes or the poetry book one publishes goes to every nook and corner of the world within minutes is an advantage poetry got from globalisation. But at the same time the spirit of globalisation is material whereas that of poetry is spiritual. As an effect of globalisation people become more money minded and selfish. So what they want to read is not poetry which preaches noble values, ethics and spirituality, but those books which are keys to comfortable and luxurious life.

**RP:** What is your innovative poetic style? Give example if any?

**KVD:** As a poet, I am responsible to my own conscience and I want to convey an emotion or a message often through social criticism. I have a commitment to my students as a professor; to the reader, scholars and writers as an editor; and to all human and non-human beings as a poet. I give priority to the content of a poem than to the style of language. That is the reason why my poems lack much imagery and other figures of speech. I am of opinion that poetry should be digestible as short stories and novels are appealing to the ordinary laymen. I adopt simple

vocabulary and conversational style often in poetry, which again attracts the ordinary readers. Here I am influenced much by the Victorian poet, Robert Browning. Newspaper reports as well as features of actual incidents, tragedies, role models in society, etc. I choose very often as subject matters for my poetry. Thus social realism has been portrayed much in my poetry. I haven't come across any poet who has used such themes in abundance.

**RP:** How has your life been different since your books came out?

**KVD:** I have received dozens of reviews and articles by eminent writers and critics on all my three poetry books, *Winged Reason*; *Write Son, Write* and *Multicultural Symphony*. Most of them have been published in several international journals and edited books. An edited book of critical/research papers on my poetry is being printed. Since readers appreciate and welcome my poetry they want more from me and my responsibility increases. Since I am also an editor of two international journals as well as several books most of my time is devoted to writing and editing.

**RP:** How have the serene and striking environs of Kerala, your native land, shaped your sensibility as a writer?

**KVD:** Kerala is God's own country with regards to its topography and to certain extent, climate. Rainy season for nearly six months makes the State green forever. There are so many rivers, brooks and lakes besides the Arabian Sea on the western side. The Sahyas on the right side stands like a huge umbrella protecting the State from intolerable heat and cause the clouds for rains. But I am not content of my fellow beings here. They are trying to turn this heaven into a hell. The way they exploit the nature and damage environment often irritates me. Though literate, they play

discordant notes to the symphony of nature. They are belligerent among themselves dancing to the tunes of dirty politicians and religious leaders. They have little love for non-human beings, plants and environment. I was compelled to present a paper entitled “Kerala God’s Own Country Turning to Devil’s Own Hell” in the SAARC literary festival at Agra in 2013. In fact my own people here make my mind bitter and aching to write so many poems dealing with social criticism.

**RP:** Do you believe that poetry can create change in the world?

**KVD:** I believe that only poetry can change and save this world. But the pity is that people have less reading habit when visual media conquered the world. Again the reading public is attracted to fiction which serves the likes of the contemporary mind. As world is after materialism, fiction satisfies people’s needs rather than trying to impart nobles values and thus try to save the humanity and the planet itself from total destruction. Great poets and great poems are there but how can the readers be attracted to them, is the question. How to survive in this world competing with the friction writers is a great challenge for poets. Tastes of the readers can be changed if publishers, academia and governments genuinely try.

**R.P:** Thanks a lot Prof. Dominic for spending your precious time with me.

**KVD:** Thank you Dr. Rohit. I was indeed a pleasure to talk with you.

## **APPENDICES**



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## Remarkable Quotes from K. V. Dominic's Poetry

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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*)

I wish I were a bullet  
and shoot into the chest of that terrorist  
who compels that teen age boy  
to explode and kill that innocent mob.

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

I could view the cry of an obese boy  
whose mother was beating him to eat more.  
A cry of a different note was heard from the next door,  
where a bony child was crying for a crump.

(“A Nightmare”, *Winged Reason*)

A lavish wedding feast was served in the town hall,  
rich delicacies heaped on the plates,  
were relished by the pompous guests  
I could see two ragged girls outside  
struggling with the dogs in the garbage bin.

(“A Nightmare”, *Winged Reason*)

Superior you boast,  
but inferior you become  
to the microbes that kill you.

(“A Sheep's Wail”, *Winged Reason*)

Eternal beauty is in achievements eternal.  
Handsome is he who handsome does.

(“Beauty”, *Winged Reason*)

Only spiritual beauty gives eternal joy.  
My dear lass, be like the sun,  
brightening this dark world with your inner beauty.

(“Beauty”, *Winged Reason*)

The depth of maternal love,  
and the pangs of separation  
no child can gauge.

(“Gayatri's Solitude”, *Winged Reason*)

Plants and animals never divide  
the earth among themselves;  
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?

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

Venerable is woman,  
for she is your mother;  
she is you sister;  
she is your wife;  
she is your guide;  
she is your teacher;  
she is your nurse;  
and above all,  
she is your angel.

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

They envy our lives;  
nurture bubbles of dreams;  
but reality pricks them of,  
and many find haven in tavern.

(“Lal Salaam to Labourers”, *Winged Reason*)

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 Labourers”, *Winged Reason*)

The sun kisses  
The eye opens  
Lotus blooms

Snow-capped mountain  
Multi-coloured sky  
God with the brush

(“Nature’s Bounties”, *Winged Reason*)

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

(“Old Age”, *Winged Reason*)

Dawn for doom  
Dusk to damn  
What a birth!

(“What a Birth!”, *Winged Reason*)

The sun of knowledge  
can never be concealed  
by the moon of ignorance.

(“Solar Eclipse”, *Winged Reason*)

Pleasures come like sprinkle,  
while pains fall like deluge  
and continue like monsoon.  
Happiness is a mist  
while sorrows shower like snow.

(“Pleasure and Pains”, *Winged Reason*)

God is dethroned  
in the name of God.  
And human gods are crowned  
in the name of God.

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

Birds and animals play  
their assonant keys.  
Man alone strikes  
discordant notes.

(“Write my Son, Write”, *Write Son, Write*)

Christmas is your  
greatest festival;  
greeting each other  
peace and happiness;  
blackest day for  
cattle, fowl and fish;  
billions butchered  
for your pleasure;  
you dine and dance,  
sing hymns of peace!  
preach gospel of love!

(“Write my Son, Write”, *Write Son, Write*)

How disproportionate  
was our love!  
How can your cent percent  
match with our ten percent?

(“An Elegy on My Ma”, *Write Son, Write*)

When will “crow-crow” be  
pleasing as “koo-koo”?  
When will the Black be  
kindred to the White?  
When will the Black and the White  
dwell in the same house  
and dine from the same plate?

(“Crow, the Black Beauty”, *Write Son, Write*)

Isn't poverty the greatest enemy?  
Why not fight against it  
and wipe out destitution,  
pointing guns, rifles and missiles  
at the chest of the poor?

("Hunger's Call", *Write Son, Write*)

Being a female,  
black and dark,  
poor and low caste,  
discriminations,  
humiliations,  
abuses and tortures,  
will come in battalions  
to give her  
Guard of Honour  
and lead her along  
the brambly path.

("Musings from an Infant's Face", *Write Son, Write*)

Morning sun gloomy:  
scattered dead bodies  
killed in bomb blast

("Nature Weeps", *Write Son, Write*)

Daya Bai shows by life  
that path of Karma is  
nobler than other paths;  
serving God in human form  
is more rewarding than  
serving Him in abstract terms.

("Sister Mercy", *Write Son, Write*)

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

("Hungry Mouths", *Multicultural Symphony*)

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

(“Sail of Life”, *Multicultural Symphony*)

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*)

Once fertile land for free and secular thoughts  
People lived in multicultural harmony  
Hindus, Muslims, Christians lived as brothers and sisters  
respected each other and their religious views  
Now hell of intolerance and religious fundamentalism  
So where shall I flee from this fretful land?

(“Where shall I Flee from This Fretful Land”, *Multicultural Symphony*)

Human being refined being  
proves often debased being!

(“Child Trafficking”, *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*)

Man, can't you hear those tremors of curses  
hurled on you by endangered animals, birds and plants?

Man, I can hear mother earth cursing you  
As Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna

(“I can Gear the Groan of Mother Earth”, *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*)

Let dove of peace fly over Indo-Pak borders  
nay, borders of each and every nation  
God, kindly sow seeds of peace, love and  
compassion in the minds of all nations' heads

(“Tribute to Siachen Martyrs”, *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond*)

How can the rich and rich countries  
waste their excess food  
when their wretched siblings  
cry for just a meal a day?  
When will the rich have prick of conscience  
for hoarding poor's share and wealth  
and starving them to die?

(“African Poverty”, *Cataracts of Compassion*)

How can God, epitome of love, be pleased  
by violence and bloodshed in His name? (“From Lamb to Wolf”,  
*Cataracts of Compassion*)

Poor people are destined to dream and dream  
while rich fulfill what they dream and desire  
(“Housemaid's Dreams”, *Cataracts of Compassion*)

Hellish is the life of an Indian widow  
Tragic and nightmarish if she is young  
Patriarchy doesn't allow her to survive  
Eagles fly over her wherever she goes  
(“I am an Indian Young Widow”, *Cataracts of Compassion*)

God will not be pleased  
By applause and noisy prayers  
But by nishkam karma

Mourning Moon to man:  
How could you shoot down  
Your mother Earth!  
(“Triplets of Wisdom”, *Cataracts of Compassion*)

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# God's Tribunal

(One Act Play)

by  
K. V. Dominic

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**Characters:** God, Earth, Man, Woman, Cow, Tiger, Cuckoo, Tree, Fish

**Location:** Earth

*(All the characters except God are assembled on the top of a mound awaiting the appearance of God. Suddenly blows a gentle breeze followed by a gleam in the sky. They all look up and hear the voice of God.)*

God: I have summoned you all since I have been getting complaints after complaints from you recently. I have created this Earth and then all inhabitants on it with a purpose that you all should live here most happily. I have bestowed here on this planet whatever needed for your existence. So there is no scope for any complaint. But I am fed up with listening to your complaints which give me no rest at all. Now let me start with my latest creation or evolution, Man. Tell me what are your complaints.

Man: Heavenly Father, even though we have been your most beloved children we have little happiness and peace here....

God (interrupting): What, what? Heavenly Father? Where is heaven? You have created such wrong concepts of heaven and hell. Heaven and hell is here on earth itself. It is in your own minds. I reside in you and all my creations. I have no separate entity. As I am invisible to you I live in your soul. Who told you that you are my most beloved children? Did I? It is your selfishness which tells you that you are the choicest of all creations. It is true that you are separate from other creatures by having reasoning power or developed brain. It is the same reasoning power which makes you most selfish of all creatures. If your brain is more developed than other creatures, they all have some features and strengths which you do not have. Now coming to your happiness and peace, who are responsible for destroying it? Other creatures? Is it because of your co-existence with them?

Cow, Tiger, Cuckoo, Tree, Fish (all together): Never! Human beings have destroyed our peace of mind and even existence. Our complaints are against them only.

God: I will listen to you one after another after my interrogation with Man. Now tell me Man, what is your genuine problem?

Man: Esteemed Father, I am standing before you as a representative of human beings. Among us about 13% are starving. One percent richest people are controlling the lives of the entire human race. Why have you created such divisions among us – very few rich and vast majority poor? However hard the poor people try to raise their standard of living, they fail. They are born poor and die poor. We have been praying to you regularly in churches, mosques, temples and other worshipping places. Majority

has no basic necessities of lives and hence no peace of mind and happiness. Non-human beings have no such problems. They need not toil as we humans for their food. They are provided everything around them and they appear to be happy. They never worship you as we humans but they are supplied with whatever they need.

God: Enough. Now I understand well your problems and grievances. Your basic problem lies in your brain. Since your brain function is different from other creatures' brains you are able to perform much mental activities which are advantageous as well as disadvantageous to you. With your brain you have done more harm than good to you and to the planet. You became more selfish than other beings. In a way I am responsible for all these because I made a test in your brain which actually boomerangs to me. If your brain was just like other beings there would not have been any complaint now. Despite your developed brain what difference is there between you and other beings? You are born into the earth as all other creatures are. The entire earth is for all creatures living on it. I haven't made any walls here. I have bestowed the earth with sufficient food and other necessities for living bodies. All other species other than you human beings are happy with the necessities around them. But you, because of your selfish nature, are not satisfied with the necessities of life, and those who are mighty conquer the weak and deprive them of their necessities and amassing their share, become rich. The rich as you have said are very few in number and your rulers are part of them exploiting the poor folk. Frankly speaking I am helpless. You told that you humans are worshipping me regularly. I never demand you to worship

me. Instead you have created innumerable religions and gods. These are all part of your selfishness. In fact are you praying for the welfare of the entire humanity and other creatures, who are your own brothers and sisters? No. That shows how selfish you are. You know that there is only one Creator. Then why should you create diverse religions and gods? Only for power and wealth, exploiting the ignorant laity. The largest number of massacres, violence and crimes on earth are in the name of religion. Instead of promoting love and compassion, your religions instill hate to others. Each religion believes that theirs is the best and they only will be saved. You should first learn that work is worship. What I expect from you is love and compassion. Love your fellow beings, all living and nonliving bodies and the planet itself which is your abode. When you love them, you love me. Live and let live should be your policy. I shall tell you more after listening to others. Woman, what is your complaint?

Woman: Dear Father, all your creatures have male and female in their species. For the continuation of your creative process they both are necessary. Among non-human beings both male and female have equal status whereas among us human beings we women are controlled, suppressed and exploited by men. Men assume superiority over women. There is no equality in any field. In most of our homes, decisions are taken by men. Wives are considered as just servants or slaves destined to work from dawn to midnight. They are ill-treated and physically tortured by their husbands in many houses. Sons have always preferences over daughters with regard to quality of food, dress etc. A daughter's birth is seldom welcomed and celebrated. Female feticide is a common

phenomenon. Girls are seldom educated in the lower class families. Rape, kidnapping, sex trade, murder of girls and women are found in almost all societies. There is discrimination in the labour sector. Women are given lesser wages. They are sexually exploited. In the law making and decision making bodies of governments, women are less represented. We are not treated equal even in praying and worshipping you. In most of the religions, clergies are all men. Women are denied entries in some worshipping places. Dear Father, kindly make men refined and good natured.

God: I haven't injected any evil instincts into any of my creations. Females in other beings have no such complaints. There male and female live with perfect harmony. No female being will surrender to a male being if attacked. She will resist and he will go back. Of course male has more muscular power than female, but when he knows that she won't yield to his threats and attacks he won't try. Woman, you have to apply the same strategy that non-human beings practice. Man can't live without woman and woman can't live without man. They are created for each other. For the continuation of a species, union of both is necessary. So there is no question of any superiority or inferiority. Both are equals and they should live with perfect harmony and rhythm. They are part of the universal concert and symphony.

Now, it is your turn, you non humans. Tell me what your grievances are.

Cow: Dear God, I represent the domestic animals of human beings – cattle, sheep, dog, cat, pig, fowls, horse, donkey, camel, elephant etc. We have been serving Man as he likes

but in return we have not been treated gratefully. On the contrary we have been poorly fed and beaten too often. When we are old and weak, not able to serve him like slaves physically, he kills us and eats. He slaughters us so cruelly killing our body inch by inch. How much we suffer painfully before life departs our body! Dogs, after use, are deserted on streets. Puppies and kittens are also disposed on streets and most of them die over run by Man's vehicles. We can't resist his tortures since we have been created as domestic animals. We could have lived happily in the forest along with our counterparts there with no fear of human beings. Dear God, either set us free or make man refined and compassionate to the animals.

God: I will reply to you after I listen to others' complaints. Now it is your turn, Tiger.

Tiger: I represent all wild animals. We have been leading a very comfortable life in the forests. The forests were bounty with whatever we needed. But human beings, not satisfied with what they were allotted, started encroaching our dwelling places, destroying forests. We have been hunted by them from their very origin. Now we have little food and water for our survival. So we are compelled to go out of our dwelling places in search of food and water and we are killed one after another by humans since we entered their villages. What justice is there? Dear God, command human beings to reforest and regain our dwellings and never enter into our area.

God: Okay. Now Cuckoo, what is your grievance?

Cuckoo: I represent all birds on earth. Our grievance is similar to Tiger's. Since man has destroyed forests as part of encroachments and trees in his villages to construct

building after buildings we have lost our abodes as well as food and water. Many of our species have become extinct. If things are going on like this, we birds will be wiped out from the planet. What harm have we done to human beings? Rather we have been serving them giving happiness to their eyes, ears and minds.

God: I understand your situation. Now let me listen to what Tree has to say.

Tree: Dear God, unlike your beings we are fated to live static and immobile. None counts the selfless service and sacrifice we make to sustain all living beings. All other beings except humans cause little trouble to us whereas human beings so ungratefully kill us, uprooting us, cutting into pieces and even burning alive. If it is for one's survival we can understand. But they do it for their comforts and luxuries. They don't understand that we too have life and sensations like them. Their recklessness and destruction mania will wipe out plant life, animal life and their own existence from this planet.

God: Alright, I am quite aware of these things. Now it your turn, Fish.

Fish: Esteemed Creator, are we created just for the consumption of other creatures? Aren't we dear to you as all other beings? Don't you see the cruelty and massacre done to us by human beings? We never do any harm to Man but he tries to extinct us from our habitations. If they hunt us and kill for their survival we can understand. Most often we are used by them for their pleasurable taste. In addition to the mass butcher Man poisons our dwelling and billions die of toxins every day.

God: Enough. Being omniscient I am witnessing all these criminalities. Now finally, what is your complaint, Earth?

Earth: Dear God, I am your daughter and these are all my children. My complaint is in fact the totality of their complaints. As you have heard, of all your creations, human beings are the only species responsible for the imbalance of Nature. They are not only exploiting and destroying other beings and plants, but also wounding me and killing me inch by inch. Don't you see the atrocities they do on my body by digging, mining, quarrying, building huge structures, dams, and above all poisoning my wounded body by dumping electronic and plastic wastes? I don't understand why you have created Homo sapiens. I assure you that if you remove Man from my body I will recover soon and you can find a paradise once again.

God: From hearing all your complaints I come to a conclusion that human beings are responsible for all the problems on earth. Like you all, I am also grieved because I created him with a noble purpose. Like any father I will be happy to see the welfare of the children, their happiness and harmonious life with cohabitation. By evolution human beings got more mental powers and functions. Humans have reasoning power. They can differentiate between good and bad. I had the impression that they would choose only right things which are beneficial to them and other beings and avoid bad things that are detrimental or harmful for their and others' survival. I never thought that they would cut off the branch that they sit. Having created I can't call them back. I am still hopeful that they would learn lessons from their wrong deeds and lead a harmonious life with other beings and Nature. If they do

not change, a total destruction of human race would result. Life would continue on this planet without man and harmony would be regained, and there will be no more complaints from any creations.

All other characters except Man and Woman: Thanks a lot dear God. We long for that doomsday.

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**Review of *Philosophical Musings for a  
Meaningful Life: An Analysis of  
K.V. Dominic's Poems***

**Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya**

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*Philosophical Musings for a Meaningful Life: An Analysis of K V Dominic's Poems* edited by Dr S Kumaran is a precursor of this volume on Dominic. It is a triumph that the book not only decodes Dominic's poems but also the aesthetics. The title itself asserts that good poetry should work towards making our lives meaningful. Absurd drama of Ionesco, Beckett and their tribe has portrayed the predicament of modern man. Life is too much with him getting and spending. And when he looks out from the cloister of life it is all darkness. Dr Kumaran however, in the context of modernist absurd drama is plunged into the musings for a meaningful life and according to him K V Dominic's poetry is an instance. The philosophical musings for a meaningful life is an anthology of illuminating essays by a band of critics of high watermark that focus on K V Dominic's poetry as the light that could lead us from the encircling gloom of modern life.

The *Philosophical Musings* opens with an article on Dominic's Poetical Mind by P C K Prem. Prem has a unique style of his own. Though the title of the article might suggest to some readers that it would be an exercise in psychological

approach to Dominic's poetry Prem here simply probes into the mind of the poet without any overt reference to super ego or ego, the conscious, subconscious or the unconscious. His essay opens with the sentence: Dominic considers multiculturalism or unity in diversity as the essence of existence. Well if one emphasizes on diversity things as they are might not work together. But Prem argues that despite the fact that human organism displays diversity still wide ranging organs work for the whole in perfect harmony. This seems to throw light on the political thought of Prem. And it seems that Dominic's poetry sees eye to eye with Prem's political thought. Dominic's unadorned style charged with genuine anxiety for the socially neglected apparently pays little concern for the craft and the style of poetry. But may we the readers ask whether art lies in concealing art or not? Every sentence of Prem's essay has food for serious thought. But we have no time to stand and stare. The present reader should be excused for that though Prem admits that Dominic is apparently realistic in his depiction of the hard realities of life the meta-realistic mind of Prem flatly says that one might find it difficult to agree with the poet. Prem's essay is a curious dialogue between him and the poet. When the poet exclaims: 'They build houses / where they never rest' ('Lal Salaam to Labourers,' *Winged Reason*) Prem observes, 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. Such exchanges of observations between a well-meaning poet and honest reader of a critic makes this essay under study intellectually challenging and delightful.

Dr S Kumaran in his "Humanism in K V Dominic's *Winged Reason*" reveals how through his treatment of human life's divine

play, politics, Indian democracy, poverty etc. Dominic declares his faith in humanism. It is human indeed to love Nature and birds and animals. In fact Dominic prescribes love for every particle of existence. And he wants to find them working in perfect harmony in accordance with God's will.

Dr Sudhir K Arora's concluding paragraph opens with the following sentence: 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 two contrasting pictures. True. This is what makes Dominic's poetry brimming with sattvika bhava. In a different article Dr Sugandha observes that Dominic looks forward to THE WORLD where all human beings will become participatory beings who will be thankful to the Being of Beings. Does not Dominic thus announce that the kingdom of heaven is at hand?

Dr D C Chambial concludes his study on *Write Son, Write*. It is a must read for all those who want to enjoy a good read with some social sanity. In other words Chambial underlines the exigency of competent readers of poetry.

T V Reddy is one of the finest sage poets of our time whose *History of Indo English Literature* is a hall mark, most comprehensive and illuminating till date. He observes: Dr Dominic is a poet with social awareness which fills almost all the lines of his poems and it is no exaggeration to say that his profound concern for the marginalised section of the society forms the life force and breath of his poetry. True. But the present author feels that Dominic should not be classed with communists thereby. He is an out and out Christian and a Hindu who has the catholicity of approach. His breadth and inclusiveness of outlook has room for reverence for a great communist like E K Nayanar. Someone among us argued that

Dominic has no appreciation for the entrepreneur who takes the risk and dares the challenge of a competitive market. But a Christian believes in initiative and investing the wealth for further production. And everywhere Dominic praises hard work and initiative. He narrates how the humble painter who painted the walls of his own house succeeded financially because of his imagination, initiative and hard work ("Fruit of Labour," *Multicultural Symphony*).

Dr Sugandha Agarwal rightly points out that Dominic's social awareness leads him to exhort philanthropy. His poems are gems in which he advocates service to God through service to men. Rob Harle consequently argues that Dominic's poetry is poetry for better world. Earlier Dr T. V. Reddy observed that though Dominic's poetry is bereft of imagery on the surface, he is richly imaginative. True. Harle however is right again when he says, "I find Dominic's poetry quite rich in imagery, sometimes brutally so." He is right when he says that Dominic's poems are work horses and not show ponies. According to Harle change occurs slowly in all societies, so the most we can hope for as activist poet of which Dominic is surely one, and poets who still have some Dylan Thomas rage left, is to get our work read so that it is dumped down into the heart of global mind.

Dr J Pamela in her essay dwells on requiem as a genre and shows that Dominic's poems could be read as requiems or solemn chants for the repose of the dead. She surveys quite a few poems by Dominic and argues that Dominic is a kind of modern conductor to these requiems sung in honour of whose lives are filled with strife of those whose lives deserve an honour befitting as noble a composition as a requiem.

Commonly an author or scholar uses poetic devices to explore subjects common to fields of literature and

philosophy and could become philosophical poetry. Dante, Blake or Dickinson are such philosopher poets. Dominic also dwells on such themes as *gunas* and *karma*. But every man is a partial philosopher and every poem not overtly philosophical could be capable of philosophical interpretation. Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman probes into the philosophy of Dominic's poetry with great insight. For example as Bhaskar observes that in the poem "In Memoriam George Josen" Dominic philosophises on death of a child vis a vis death. The child does not know what death is and what it means to the other members of the family left behind. Thus poet explores the ambiguity of a situation. Think of Wordsworth's "We are Seven". Death is not annihilation but a change of state. Bhaskar observes, "Note how the poet philosophises on the innocence of a child when her sisters are mourning piteously for their dead father the youngest child is taking flowers from the wreaths placed on the dead body and indulge in throwing flowers at her weeping and screaming sisters. Next the poet exclaims, "What game he plays / When he comes riding his chariot / None can say Wait." Bhaskar observes, "When He comes riding His chariot sounds Tennysonian. God comes down to guide the soul of Josen back to his original home, the eternity. Similar explications of poems after poems seem to prove that Dominic is one of the foremost philosopher poets of our time. Thank you Bhaskar.

Dr S Ayyappa Raja concludes his essay on Dominic with the comment: "By his treatment of such issues as poverty child labour... K V Dominic has carved a niche of his own as a great social critic in the arena of Indian poetry."

Poetry is rebellion said Pablo Neruda. With Joe Palathunkal every poem contains in it streaks and streams of rebellion. In some poems the rebellion is very obvious. But in some others it is camouflaged by various hues and shades. Joe places Dominic's

poetry in the second category. And for this reason Joe observes that rebellion and reticence go hand in hand in Dominic's poetry. Joe says, "When I read his (Dominic's) poems I get the impression that though he wants to cry out loud, something makes him hold back and so he prefers to sob in silence; but the silence carries with it and eloquence, which is awakening and enlightening.... Joe points out that compassion is the leit motive in most of Dominic's poetry." What he wants to notice in his poem is the nature of its sympathy, a feeling with the victim or the underdog which we call empathy in modern psychological terms. Taking the cue from Joe we might say Dominic's poetry is the Bible of kindness. Dominic raises countless questions against prevalent practices in the society. But he does not pose as an obvious rebel like the poets of Latin America. Joe observes "The poet's worldview is very clear from his several poems where he sees all the creatures and plants as interconnected and intra-connected, where one cannot alienate from the other. It is an all-encompassing worldview and he does not give human beings any hallowed place in creation. In such a *weltanschauung*, reticence will be a corollary of rebellion because you cannot really rebel against the other as the other is part of you. In fact Joe's insight into the historical context is time and again.

Patricia Prime earmarks Dominic as a philosopher poet. She touches upon Dominic's message philosophy and style with pithy and terse sentences. Each one of them needs explication which is beyond our compass. Patricia observes that Dominic is a poet who has much to tell us, whose writing is clear and worth the effort to read.

Anisha Ghosh Paul, Dr. Mahboobeh Khaleghi, Dr. Sangeta Mahesh, Dr Radhamani Sarma, Rincy Mol Sebastian, Dr. Arabind Kumar Choudhary, Kavitha Gopalakrishnan, Prof

Elisabetta Marino, Dr S Barathi are all significant scholars who have represented Dominic's poetry from unique standpoints. When we join them together there is the efflorescence of n dimensions of poetry as such and Dominic's poetry and readers will circumambulate Dominic's poetry knowing not what to say in times to come. Om Tat Sat!

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## Contributors

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