A Session of Exclusive Interaction: Goutam karmakar in Conversation with Poet, Short Story Writer & Novelist K.V.Raghupathi

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ABOUT K.V.RAGHUPATHI

Born in 1957 in a Telugu speaking family in Andhra Pradesh, Dr K.V. Raghupathi has established himself as a poet, novelist, short story writer and critic. Apart from writing, he is a professor by profession and students of the department of English of Central University of Tamil Nadu have got the opportunity to be served by this lofty persona. Before that he has served for S.V. University, Tirupati for twelve years and Yogi Vemana University for four and a half years. Regarding his academic qualifications he has received his post-graduate degree from Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati in 1979 and from the same university he received his PhD in 1997. He holds PGDTE from the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. He has directed his energy in some other directions. He not only holds a diploma in Karnataka Music but also works as a promoter of classical Karnatakic music. He is also a yoga practitioner and published over thirty articles and two full length books on yoga namely Yoga for Peace (2006) and Yoga and Zen: A Monograph (2007). His writings on Yoga can be found in reputed cultural journals like Vedanta Kesari (Chennai), Saptagiri (Tirupati), Prabhudda Bharat (Kolkata) and Sri Aurobindo’s Action (Pondicherry).

It was the year 1985 when he has taken writing seriously and since then he has published ten poetry collections, two long fictions and two short fictions. It is poetry that has given him success and his poetry collections are Desert Blooms (1987), Echoes Silent (1988), The Images of a Growing Dying City (1989), Small reflections (2000), Samarpana (2006), Voice of the Valley (2006, 2014), Wisdom of the Peepal Tree (2006, 2014), Dispersed Symphonies (2010), Orphan and Other Poems (2010), and Between Me and the Babe (2014). His another collection, On the Surface and Beyond the Surface is in the pipeline. In 2012 he published his first novel The Invalid and his second The Disappointed came out in 2014. Reliance Publishing House of New Delhi published his first short story collection The Untouchable Piglet in 2015 and his second short story collection, A Gay and A Straight Woman is being published by Authorspress, New Delhi. Besides these, he has edited seven books and this makes him an eminent critic and reviewer. For the service he has given for Indian English literature, he has been honoured with several awards like Michael Madhusudhan Dutt Academy Award, best poet award in 2003 by Poetry Society of India, New Delhi and Poetry Chain, Mumbai. Rock Pebbles National Award for Creativity, Life Time Achievement Award and many more.
In an interview with Goutam Karmakar, Prof. K.V.Raghupathi unlocked his creative faculty as well as his thoughts and views on various topics raised by Goutam before his readers and the world in general.

TEXT OF THE INTERVIEW

Q1. Goutam karmakar: Sir tell us something about student life and college days. Have your childhood memories left any impact on your writing? Do you still cherish those days?

K.V.Raghupathi: As a student I was not so bright enough to get distinctions and honours in my studies. But I was bright in my own way. Not necessarily this should be measured only in the sense of scoring high marks and getting medals. You must know that in this world average people and a little above average people have made success in their life. The reason is they define life in their own way which does not usually go or fit in with academic measurements used in institutions. And ‘creativity’ cannot be measured in that sense. Artistic talents are nothing to do with marks. An artist is a unique person; he/she cannot be put in any casket. In respect of my childhood memories and their impact on my writings, I would say that all my writings are reflections of my own experiences. They are not created. I believe in my own experiences, carrying their potential. Nothing inspires me more than life. Life is my source of passion, and it has gifted me rewarding experiences. My memory is a repository from which I draw material for my writings.

Q2. Goutam karmakar: You are a poet, novelist, short story writer, critic and you are also a professor by profession. How do you make a balance in so many ways? And in what way do you want to be remembered for ever as a poet or novelist or as a human being?

K.V.Raghupathi: Yes, balancing is difficult. It is a time management. My hectic day’s activities begin in the early morning at three and go on till 10.30 PM. I am not a professional writer. I do creative writings during holidays. On other days I will have to stick to academic work. I don’t want to be identified by any label. Let me be known as a simple human being to the world.

Q3. Goutam karmakar: From which age did you begin to write poetry? Have you ever come across ‘writer’s block’ while composing poems? Have you been influenced by British romantic and Victorian poetry? Name some of your favourite texts.

K.V.Raghupathi: I began writing seriously in the early 1980s. By then I had completed my university education. I have never come across ‘writer’s block’ so far. I have never been influenced by English Romantics and Victorian poets. I read all books. It is hard for me to name a few favourite books of mine.
Q4. Goutam karmakar: What is your definition of poetry? What are the unique and salient features that make K.V.Raghupathi apart from others? What styles have you adopted for writing novels?

K.V.Raghupathi: For me poetry is a mere feeling. Feeling needs to be distinguished from emotionality. Feeling is almost an internal form of the sense of touch. In contrast emotions are mere local disturbances of the body-mind complex. Feeling transcends them all, just as it transcends our self-sense and our bodily image. In feeling, we reach out beyond the apparent walls of our body-mind. Emotions are impermanent, while feelings are transcendental and permanent. Above all, writing poetry for me is a transcendental experience. I write poetry because I have a deep urge to explore the meaning of existence. And I find poetry serves me as the best vehicle. It experiences and expresses truth much more clearly than prose. Hence my poetry is chiefly marked by romantic and transcendental elements. I think these views make me different from other poets.

In the case of novels, I am very unconventional. I don’t make chapterization. My novels deal with single long experiences. In The Invalid the experiences of a protagonist are presented lasting in a few hours. The Disappointed, my second novel, too deals with human existence in a similar way. You don’t find any story in conventional sense. I present human plight without making much fuss of it.

Q5. Goutam karmakar: It seems that you are a worshipper of nature. How far have you projected nature and transcendentalism in your verse? Do you want to call yourself ‘A Romantic’ in this aspect?

K.V.Raghupathi: Yes, I am very Romantic in creating, in celebrating the element of beauty in nature, in presenting the plight of man and so on. In every sense I am romantic. To call me what I am is your job.

Q6. Goutam karmakar: Your Desert Blooms is centered on a conversation among three souls about philosophy of life. What is the philosophy of life that you want to show in Desert Blooms?

K.V.Raghupathi: In this long poem, incidentally happens to be my first work, the conversation among the three souls is presented without drawing any conclusion. Each soul’s perspectives are presented, and no soul agrees with the other. That is how life is viewed. About any philosophy if I have said in that book, it is for you to see.

Q7. Goutam karmakar: What are the dominating themes of your Echoes Silent? Are you an existentialist in this piece as you are disenchanted in many things in this single long poem?

K.V.Raghupathi: I don’t know about that. This is a long poem that deals with my disenchantment with what I have learnt from human institutions. You must have noticed from the narration, how much I have felt it.
Q8. Goutam Karmakar: Do you think yourself as a social reformer and how by your poems you are trying to reform the society? What are the ways in which the condition of society and mankind is deteriorating? Illustrate this point.

K.V. Raghupathi: That is the last thing I can do in my life. I don’t believe in being a social reformer in any sense. All such social reformations have failed. I believe that if any reformation is to happen, it should take place within oneself first. A change within oneself will have its reflection on the society too automatically. I don’t believe any change outside of you. All reformations must start with you. That is the starting point. If you make this humble beginning, the rest takes place on its own.

Q9. Goutam Karmakar: You are an eco-socialist by nature as your poems deal with Eco critical perspectives. How will you define your eco-poems? Are you really happy with human’s attitude towards nature now?

K.V. Raghupathi: You can label me in any sense. That is your job. I am not happy with the way nature is being systematically destroyed by man. Attitudinal change will come if only transformation in human consciousness takes place. If one needs to become sensitive, not superficially but really and deeply, you will see difference. You will see the change all around.

Q10. Goutam Karmakar: How have you blended philosophy and beauty in your poems? What kind of utopian world do you build in your poems through your imaginative faculty?

K.V. Raghupathi: I don’t build any ideal society in imagination. I am a realist down to earth. Yes, both philosophy and beauty prominently figure in my poetry. You can make out of it if you could really see such utopian world.

Q11. Goutam Karmakar: What are the reflections that can be found in your Small Reflections? Do you really think you’re a sensitive one to all contemporary issues?

K.V. Raghupathi: They are small-scale reflections in my life. I have just recorded them as and when they occurred in my mind. Interestingly you will find several poems dealing with simple aspects of human life.

Q12. Goutam Karmakar: Your Voice of the Valley seems a treasure house of pure wisdom. What kind of wisdom are you talking about here? What kind of message do you want to give here by this poetic collection?

K.V. Raghupathi: Yes, the book is a marvelous feat in my writing career. It speaks pure wisdom. You know, it was for this book which was originally published as ‘Voice Eternal’ in 1991, I got Michael Madhusudhan Academy Award from Kolkata. One professor from Allahabad University by name Prof. Dhawan I could hardly make it read this and wrote me a deeply touching letter of high appreciation in 1991. In that letter he asked me how I had got such high wisdom at that age.
You know when I wrote this I was in my late twenties. Unfortunately I lost that letter. The message is there. It is for you to see and realize.

Q13. Goutam karmakar: Are you a mystic by nature? How do you present mysticism and spirituality in your poetry? Where lies the Indianness in your poems?

K.V. Raghupathi: Yes, you are right. Several critics and readers have pointed out this particular element in my poetry. Such elements cannot be identified with any label. Pure wisdom is transcendental, crosses all boundaries and limitations. It belongs to humanity. Indianness is found in several individual poems dealing with several contemporary subjects.

Q14. Goutam karmakar: How do you present women in your poems? Your poems take stand for the people of lower status and underprivileged like beggar, deserted baby, abandoned child and many others. So are your poems crying for humanism?

K.V. Raghupathi: It is for you to see and identify, to what extent I have presented women in my writings. It is true, several poems and short stories deal with the underprivileged. I notice suffering in them to the core. I am a humanist in that sense.

Q15. Goutam karmakar: Are you a melancholic and pensive one? What role does emotion play for you while composing poems?

K.V. Raghupathi: I am a realist to the core. More than emotion, it is feeling that comes to stay in me, and I translate it into words. I have already spoken about it at length.

Q16. Goutam karmakar: What are the difficulties you faced while publishing The Invalid? Do you think the publishing houses are now controlling authors for commercial benefits?

K.V. Raghupathi: So many difficulties. That novel, I don’t call it in conventional sense, has not seen the light for three decades since I wrote in 1980s. At one stage I felt like destroying this novel along with the other two more novels which I wrote in 1980s. About publishers controlling authors for commercial benefits, it is partially true. But I don’t fit in their shoes. I cannot write according to the dictates of someone to suit his/he interests. Then there is no difference between a film script writer and a creative artist.

Q17. Goutam karmakar: Your The Disappointed is autobiographical in tone. In which way have you presented your experiences here? How far would you like to consider your fictions as existential and absurd pieces of human condition?

K.V. Raghupathi: I have already said that I draw material from my memory for my writings. Yes, to a great extent my writings deal with human existence, and invariably drawn from my own experiences.
Q18. Goutam karmakar: What is the future of Indian Poetry written in English? Why poetry is gaining less popularity? As a poet and professor what are the possible suggestions you want to give to make a better future for poetry and poets?

K.V.Raghupathi: That is an illusory perception. Indian poetry in English has not dwindled. In fact, it has gained great momentum. You see so many are writing poetry in English. Interesting fact about it is that several women poets have emerged on the scene, and their bagging several international awards itself is testimony for the popularity of poetry. It has not declined. I say poetry has better future, bright future. It requires no special sermons.

Q19. Goutam karmakar: What are your future projects? Will you find interest in translation works? Do you write in your mother tongue, Telugu language also?

K.V.Raghupathi: As of now I am editing the poetry of marginalized voices, who have been writing for long but have not received considerable attention from the academic world. I have already edited three poets, namely Gopal Honnalgere, T.Vasudeva Reddy, and P.Raja. As for writing in my own mother tongue, I haven’t attempted so far. About translation too, I am yet to venture into it.

Q20. Goutam karmakar: What will be your advice to the new poets? Among contemporary Indian poets writing in English, whose work do you want to read?

K.V.Raghupathi: I don’t have any special advice for young poets. Let them depend on their own experiences for material instead of borrowing somebody’s experiences. There is no need to wait for Muse to inspire them. But much of what happens thereafter comes under craftsmanship. It requires diligence, patience and skill. I read all contemporary poets.

Q21. Goutam karmakar: Do you have any specific goal to achieve as a writer? What are the messages that you want to give to your readers and to the human world?

K.V.Raghupathi: I don’t have any specific goal in my life. I write because urge is there. I don’t write for someone or to propagate my ideology which I don’t have. I want to get rid of the excess of emotions and feelings in me. About giving any special message to humanity, my writings are my messages.

Goutam karmakar: Thanks Dr. K.V. Raghupathi for giving me the chance to explore your thoughts.

K.V.Raghupathi: Thank you Goutam for your queries. My Warm wishes are always for you.