Jaydeep Sarangi and Rob Harle (eds.), *The Land: Poems from Australia and India* (Cyberwit.net, 2015)

This anthology collects poems united by the theme of ‘the land’ in a glocal context. It includes seven contemporary Australian poets and an equal number of Indian poets. They look at nostalgic reminiscences of land, socialistic views of land, appreciation of nature in India and Australia, eco-consciousness and philosophy of life.

The notion of the poetry of the land is always tuned with the past. In this light, some poets in this anthology explore the flashing moments already left back. Arundhati Subramaniam’s ‘Recycled’ provides reminiscences of the land as she remembers how she used to draw the picture of a home when she was five-year-old. Kerry Petherbridge, in his ‘The Sound of My Childhood in Leaving’, reflects on how his voice is getting echoed in the track of time. Mark Cornell recollects pleasant memories of his school days with Sugar-Loaf Mountain and the shadow of trees on it. Nandini Sahu writes of the faint memory of her past home in ‘Many Lands, Many Homes’, comparing it with ‘a dry flower pressed between pages of an old diary’ (72). Sharmila Ray is impressed by the historical episodes of a sea voyage in her poem ‘Voyage’. Altogether, a complete artistic sketch of poetic images is canvassed.

Societal as well as socialistic views constitute a creative reflection. Chandramohan S., in his ‘Occupy Graveyard Movement: On the Landless Dalits of India’, speaks against those who have occupied power and wealth through their legacy and made many other people landless. In ‘Land for the Tiller’, he talks of the brevity of the tiller raising his voice against the capitalist. K. Srilata writes her ‘Artist of Boundaries' referring to Sir Cyril Radcliffe’s role in forming the dividing line between India and Pakistan, naming him an ‘unwitting geographer’ (56). She writes ironically in ‘Loud is Rains Arriving’, remarking on the ‘real estate promoters’ and talking about their alluring strategies of selling houses. She mocks the concept of a smart home in her ‘Sometimes Referred to as Dry land.’ Syed Ali Ahmed’s ‘Indian Muslims’ is about the deeply rooted culture of Muslims in India. Then, Rob Harle, in his ‘The Old man and the Vineyard’, talks about a mysterious situation of distinguishing between modern reality and ancient values.

Nature in the tapestry of the land provides spell-bound experiences. Heather Taylor Johnson, in her ‘The Harvest’ and ‘Life Cycles’, reflects on her emotional attachment. Her ‘Mountain Rain’ speaks of amazingly deafening rain and ‘Life Science in the Garden at Albertan Primary’ speaks of jolly children enjoying natural activities in the garden. John Dean praises a mountain called Munibung but regrets that such a mountain is damaged by bulldozers. Another landscape called ‘Bed Red’ reminds him of mortality. Peter Jeffery’s ‘Tenterden 1959’ tells of the enjoyment during the spring time as perceived by an infant. His ‘Terra Forming’ talks about self-realisation as a consequence of fast movement of the eyes in perceiving natural calamities. Mark Cornell talks of the beautiful movement of the moon on the white dunes in his ‘She’s Fading’. His ‘Koonung Creek’ reflects on the beauty of the river as it moves forward collecting ‘the bobbling wild flowers’ alongside to the ‘Ancient Creek’. His ‘A Tune of Mt. Oberon’ follows the same romantic description of the mount in the gloomy moonlight and his ‘An Olinda Night’ portrays the beauty of stars in the rippling sea water.

Nandini Sahu in ‘From Dust to Dust’ talks about the importance of the five ethereal unblemished elements that constitute our being having higher spiritual value. In ‘Puri Beach’,

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she narrates her unique experiences with the ambience of the holy place. Nathalie Buckland talks of enjoyment of the heat of summer in ‘Coal Change’ and reflects on human plight in the rising red moon. Peter Jeffery’s ‘Bulldozers Cleaning with Chain’ describes how a ‘wombat snuffled’ forward in search of food everywhere ‘Lond Cemetery’ philosophically finds tears in the dew, which leads to a series of thoughts. In ‘The Dawn Is to Come’ and ‘For Juniper’, he refreshes his memory with the change of time. Then, Peter Nicholson’s ‘Figures in a Landscape’ portrays the beauty of the land that poetically marks interval between the Indian and Pacific oceans. His ‘In a Country Garden’ reflects on the movement of natural elements leading to ‘green desire.’ Syed Ali Hamid in his ‘The Land in Monsoon’ narrates the feelings of the arrival of monsoon marking happiness for some but loss for others. Appreciating nature, Jaydeep Sarangi, in his poem, ‘My Temple of Delight’, talks of the love of his village and its surrounding that was full of natural beauty but left with only a memory now.

Arundhati Subramaniam attracts attention towards ‘Olive Ridley in Kolavipalam’ and Jan Dean focuses on another aspect of eco-concern in her poem ‘Vista 2014 relating to an incident in which her neighbours excavated a pool and dumped that with dirty materials. Her ‘The Avenue 2012’ reflects on human-made disaster. Her ‘Native Entitlement’, Patherbridge laments the destruction of a community-built fairweather bridge by the government and its replacement by a huge iron structure which destroyed the natural ambience of the locality. K.Srilata’s ‘Speaking of Land’ is about eco-disaster owing to scarcity of water. Sharmila Roy’s poems speak of the gradual decay of natural habitats into mechanical set ups.

Life’s philosophy is very much reflected in Heather Taylor Johnson’s ‘The Weight of Which Water’. She associates growth of life with water. Patherbridge, in his ‘Getting back on Track’, says that, while walking, thoughts and feelings lead to knowledge full of music. Nicholson’s ‘Panorama’ expresses how destinies and deviations go on leading to new birth and new age. Hamid’s poems like ‘Earthly Love’, ‘Dusk’ and ‘Dreamland’ speak of manifestation and freedom of soul altogether.

Love of land is reflected through the attachment with places as in Arundhati’s ‘Madras’ the memory of foods and visiting places are recollected and give a glocal context. Nicholson’s ‘Australia’ brings an impressive reflection on the country where ‘each nerve stained its energy flash to word, into the world’ (94). This contrasts with A.D. Hope’s poem with the same title. In ‘Sidney’, he reflects on how kookaburra trees, blossoms and many other ‘images float to brain’ (97).

The undertone of spirituality is there in the poems as Debjani’s ‘Meru’ describes the holiness of the golden mountain and echoes W.B. Yeats’ poem with the same title, which speaks of the pilgrimage to the holy mountain in search of the ultimate truth.

To conclude, both Australian and Indian poems in the anthology can be seen as a representation of the multi-folded aspects of postmodern time. The poets are often found struggling with questions of identity; experiencing the conflict of living between the old and the new; the native world and the invading forces of hegemony from emerging cultures. Creativity is seen in a continuous state of flux. The poets not only eulogise their nations but also forefront the reality.